THE PLEASANT HISTORY OF LAZARILLO de TORMES

a Spanyard, wherein is contained his maruellous deeds and life.

With the ſtrange aduentures happened to him, in the ſeruice of ſundry Maſters.

Drawen out of Spaniſh, by *Dauid Rowland* of *Angleſey*.

Accuerdo, Oluido.

LONDON,
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TO THE HONOURABLE, SIR CHARLES STANHOPE, Knight of the Bath, Heyre Apparant to the right Honourable, IOHN, Lord STANHOPE, one of his Maieſties moſt honourable Priuy Counſell.

SIR,

Azarillo de Tormes, (according to his Maſters profeſsion) hath beene a

great while, though to ſmall purpoſe, a begger in Spaine; A diſeaſe, which in reſpect of the heat of the Climate, and the coldnes of charity, is there holden incurable: In hope to better his fortunes here amongſt vs (where ſuch cures are more ordinary:) He is, after ſome vnneceſſary ſtayes in France, and much labor, in learning to ſpeak our Engliſh, ar-

riued

riued vpon these coasts: where falling into my hands, & being affrayd of euery Vnder-Officer, hee hath emboldened himselfe (vpon the frequent profession of mine humble and hearty desires, to doe your Honor seruice) to make me his vnworthy Mediator, that vnder your honourable protection and allowance, he may *stil* beg for approbation,

amongst your noble friends, *Cum priuilegio*. VVhich earnest suit of his owne conception, is and shall be (as farre as may stand with my duty) enforced and seconded by

Your Honours most humble seruant,

Tho: Walkley.

To the right worshipfull, Sir *Thomas Gresham*, Knight.

WHen I had read ouer this little Treatise (Right Worshipfull) finding it, for the number of strange and merry reports, very recreatiue and pleasant: I thought it no labour euill bestowed, to occupy my selfe in the translation thereof. And being moued thereto the rather, perceiuing that in France many delighted therein, being turned into their tongue, I fully determined to bring my former preterence to end: Considering, that besides much mirth, here is also a true description of the nature and disposition of sundry Spanyards. So that by reading hereof, such as haue not trauelled Spaine,

Spaine, may as well diſcerne much of the manners and cuſtomes of that Countrey, as thoſe that haue there long time continued. And being now finiſhed, I was ſo bold as to dedicate the fruit of my ſimple labour vnto your Worſhip, who both for trauell, daily conference with diuers Nations, and knowledge in all forraine matters, is knowen to be ſuch an one, as is well able to iudge, whether theſe reports of little *Lazaro*, be true or not. Wherfore I moſt humbly beſeech your Worſhip, fauourably to accept this poore preſent, (as offered of one) who wiſheth vnto you and yours, all health, wealth, long life, with increaſe of all vertue and worſhip: Truſting, that after your waighty & important affaires, to eaſe your tedious exerciſes, you will recreate your ſelfe with reading of ſome pleaſant part hereof.

Your Worſhips moſt humbly to command, Dauid Rowland.

Lazarillo of Tormes

Prologue

I find it only right that matters so exceptional,[1] and perhaps[2] never before heard or seen, should come to the attention of the public and not be buried in the grave of oblivion, because someone reading them might very well find something congenial in them, and some aspect of them might entertain those who don't delve so deeply. And, in connection with this, Pliny[3] says that there's no book, bad as it may be, which doesn't have some good quality. Especially because not all tastes are the same, but what one man won't eat, another man is wild for; and so we see things disparaged by some people that aren't by others. And therefore nothing should be torn up and thrown away, unless it's extremely objectionable, but everything should be made known to everyone, especially if it's harmless and some advantage can be derived from it. Because, if that weren't so, very few authors would write for an audience of one, since a book isn't written without toil, and, if they undergo this, they want to be rewarded, not with money, but by having their works seen and read, and praised if they deserve it. On this subject, Cicero says: "The quest for reputation creates the arts."[4]

Who imagines that the soldier who is first to scale a wall in a siege is the one who most hates life? Not at all: it's the yearning for praise that makes him expose himself to danger. And it's the same in the arts and letters. The divinity graduate seeking an appointment delivers a fine sermon, and he's a man who is very eager for the welfare of his listeners' souls; but let them ask the gentleman if it annoys him to have people say: "Oh, what a wonderful job your reverence did!" Sir What's-his-name performed terribly in a joust, but he made his buffoon a gift of the doublet he wore beneath his armor because the buffoon praised him for wielding his lances wonderfully. What would he have done if it were true?

1. Or: "so often criticized." 2. Or: "fortunately." 3. In one of his letters, the Roman author Pliny the Younger (*c.* A.D. 61–*c.* 112) attributes this remark to his uncle, the encyclopedist Pliny the Elder (A.D. 23–79). 4. The Roman statesman, orator, and philosopher (106–43 B.C.) makes this remark in his *Tusculan Disputations.*

And everything works the same way. Though I confess that I'm no holier than my neighbors, I won't be sorry if all those who might take some pleasure in this trifle, which I'm writing in this crude style, will come to know it and enjoy it, and if they see that a man can survive so many misfortunes, perils, and adversities.

I beseech Your Honor to accept this poor handiwork of one who would make you richer if his power were as great as his wishes. And since Your Honor has written me requesting me to write to you and narrate the matter in great detail, I felt that I shouldn't start in the middle, but begin at the beginning, so that you may become fully acquainted with me, and, in addition, so that those who have inherited noble rank may judge how little that is due to their own merits, since Fortune favored them, and how much more was accomplished by those who, finding Fortune hostile to them, reached a safe haven by rowing with strength and skill.

CHAPTER ONE

Lázaro Tells the Story of His Life and Whose Son He Was

Well, Your Honor should know first of all that I'm called Lázaro of Tormes, son of Tomé Gonzales and Antona Pérez, natives of Tejares, a village just outside Salamanca. My birth took place within the river Tormes, on account of which I adopted this surname, and it happened this way: My father, may God forgive him, was assigned to supervising the grinding of grain at a water mill located on the banks of that river; he was miller there for more than fifteen years. One night when my mother, pregnant with me, was in the mill, she was seized with her labor pains and gave birth to me there. And so I can truly say I was born in the river.

Well, when I was a boy of eight, my father was accused of some careless "blood-lettings" in the sacks of those who brought their grain to be ground there. On that account he was arrested, confessed and didn't deny it, and suffered punishment at the hands of justice. I hope to God that he's in glory, because the Gospel says that those who are persecuted for the sake of justice are blessed. At that time a certain naval expedition was mounted against the Moors,[5] and my father was

5. In 1494, the Pope, generously dividing up the world among the explorer nations, gave much of North Africa to the Spaniards, who needed only to conquer it! They made many raids in the course of the 16th century.

among them,[6] being in exile at the time because of the above-mentioned misfortune. He was serving as a mule driver for a knight who was there; like a loyal servant, he died along with his master.

My widowed mother, finding herself without a husband or a roof over her head, decided to "throw in her lot with the good people, and so join their number." She moved into town, rented a little house, and began to cook meals for some of the university students; she also did laundry for some stable hands in the employ of the Knight Commander of the Church of the Magdalen,[7] so that she frequented the stables.[8] She and a black man, one of those who took care of the horses, got to know each other very well. Sometimes[9] he would come to our house and leave in the morning; other times he would come to our door in the daytime with the pretext of buying eggs, and would then come inside. When he first started visiting us, I disliked him and was afraid of him because of his color and his ugly face; but as soon as I realized that his visits meant better food for us, I grew to like him, because he always brought along bread, pieces of meat, and, in the wintertime, firewood for keeping us warm.

And so, as his stay with us and his intimacy with my mother continued, she finally presented me with a very cute little black brother, whom I used to dandle and help tuck in. And I remember that, once, when my unhappy[10] stepfather was playing with the little boy, the child, seeing that my mother and I were white but his father wasn't, was frightened by him, took refuge with my mother, and pointed at him, saying: "Mommy, the bogeyman!" Laughing, he replied: "You rascal!" Though I was still a boy, I took notice of what my little brother said, and I thought to myself: "How many people there must be in the world who shun others because they can't see themselves!"

As our bad luck would have it, my mother's intimacy with Zaid, for that was his name, came to the attention of the Knight Commander's steward. When he investigated, it was discovered that my stepfather was stealing half of the barley he was given for the horses; he was pretending that bran, wood, currycombs, rubdown towels, and horse blankets and cloths were being lost. When he found nothing else to take, he used to unshoe the horses. He used all this to help my mother raise my little brother. Let's not be surprised when a priest steals from

6. At least one commentator, perhaps over-subtly, believes that the ambiguous Spanish wording implies a joke on the author's part that Lázaro's father was himself a Moor (a *morisco*, or convert). 7. This church in Salamanca was the property of the knightly order of Alcántara. 8. This may imply that she was a cheap prostitute. 9. Or "some nights," if, as some editors believe, the Spanish *algunas veces* is an error for *algunas noches*. 10. With a pun on "black."

the poorbox to support his sweethearts, or when a friar plunders his monastery to help out his own "lady devotees,"[11] if a poor slave was emboldened to do this out of love.

All the charges against him that I've mentioned, and more, were proved, because they interrogated me with threats and, child that I was, my fear led me to answer and reveal all I knew, even confessing that, at my mother's request, I had sold some horseshoes to a blacksmith. My unfortunate stepfather was flogged and had hot fat dripped onto his wounds. My mother's sentence, over and above the usual hundred lashes,[12] was never again to enter the house of the above-mentioned Knight Commander nor to receive the wounded Zaid in her own house.

So as not to make a bad matter worse,[13] the unhappy woman took heart and complied with the sentence. In order to avoid danger and free herself from slander, she became a servant of the people who were then running the Solana tavern.[14] There, suffering a thousand annoyances, she managed to raise my little brother until he could walk, and me until I was quite a big boy. I used to fetch wine and candles for the customers, and whatever else they sent me for.

At that time a blind man came to stay at the inn. Thinking I would make a suitable guide for him, he asked my mother for me. She entrusted me to him, telling him that I was the son of a good man who, in an effort to exalt our religion, had died on the expedition to Los Gelves;[15] she trusted in God that I wouldn't turn out to be a worse man than my father, and she asked him to treat me well and look after me, because I was an orphan. He answered that he would, and that he was taking me on not as a servant but as a son. And so I began to serve and guide my master, who was both new and old.

After we had been in Salamanca several days, my master felt that he wasn't earning as much as he would like, and he decided to leave. When we were to set out, I went to see my mother. We both wept, and she gave me her blessing, saying: "Son, I know now that I'll never see you again. Try to be a good boy, and may God direct your ways. I've brought you up and I've placed you with a good master. Take care of yourself."

And so I went to meet my master, who was waiting for me. We left Salamanca and came to the bridge. At the city end of it, there's a stone

11. This sentence, very ambiguous in the original, has been interpreted in a surprisingly large number of ways. 12. As a "heretic" cohabiting with a non-Christian. At least two Spanish editors have thought that Zaid was hanged; neither one was worried about the prohibition to receive him! 13. Literally: "to throw away the rope after losing the cauldron." 14. Located in the Salamanca city hall. 15. An island near Tunis, site of a raid, disastrous to the Spanish, in 1510.

figure of an animal, that looks something like a bull.[16] The blind man ordered me to go up to the animal. When I was standing there, he said: "Lázaro, put your ear next to this bull, and you'll hear a big noise inside it."

In my naïveté, I did so, believing what he said. When he sensed that my head was alongside the stone, he stiffened his hand and knocked my head hard against that damned bull, so that the pain of the "goring" lasted more than three days, and he said: "Dumbbell, learn that a blind man's boy needs to know a little more than the Devil does."

And he had a good laugh over his trick. I felt that at that very moment I awoke from the naïveté in which I had been childishly sleeping. I said to myself: "He's speaking the truth: it's up to me to keep my eyes peeled and to stay alert, because I'm alone in the world, and to plan how to look after myself."

We began our journey, and in a very few days he taught me his professional jargon; finding that I was a bright boy, he was very pleased, and he'd say: "I can't give you gold or silver, but I can give you plenty of advice on how to live." And so, after God, this man gave me life again and, though blind, he illumined and guided me on my path through existence. I take the time to recount these childish matters to Your Honor to show you what a great virtue it is when men of low condition are able to rise in life, and what a great vice it is when people high up let themselves slip down.

Well, to get back to my good blind man and to tell you about him, Your Honor should know that ever since God created the world, He never fashioned a shrewder or wiser man. He was an ace at his calling: he knew over a hundred prayers by heart; his voice was deep, calm, and very resonant, so that it rang through any church where he was praying; his face was humble and pious, and he controlled it carefully when he prayed, and didn't make grimaces and "faces" with his mouth or eyes as others generally do. In addition, he had a thousand other ways and means to get people's money. He told them that he knew prayers for many different purposes: for women who had no children, for those in childbirth, for those unhappily married, to make their husbands love them. He predicted to pregnant women whether they would have a boy or a girl. Then, when it came to curing, he said that Galen[17] didn't know half of what he did about toothache, fainting spells, and inflammations of the womb. Lastly, no one reported any

16. This Celtiberian bull or boar was put back on the Roman bridge in 1974 after a long absence. 17. Famous Greek physician of the second century A.D.

ailment to him without his replying at once: "Do this, do that, take[18] this herb, use this root." And so everyone trailed at his heels, especially the women, who believed everything he told them. He used to make great profit from them with the ruses I've mentioned, and he'd earn more in a month than a hundred other blind men did in a year.

But I also want Your Honor to know that, despite all that he made and owned, I never saw a greedier or stingier man, so much so that he used to kill me with hunger, and I never got even half of what I needed. I'm telling the truth: if I hadn't been able to help myself out with my cleverness and shrewd schemes, I would have perished of hunger many a time; but, despite all his knowledge and alertness, I fought back with so many ruses that I wound up with the most and the best always, or most of the time. In order to do this, I played mischievous tricks on him, some of which I'll tell you, though I didn't always get off scot-free.

He used to carry our bread and the rest of our supplies in a burlap sack, the opening of which was closed with an iron ring and which he kept under lock and key. When he put things in it or took them out, he was so vigilant and so meticulous that no one in the whole world could make him lose a crumb. And I used to take that miserable pittance he gave me, which was finished in less than two bites. After he fastened the lock and relaxed his guard, thinking that I was occupied with other things, I used to "bleed" that miserly sack through a small seam on one side of it that I would unsew and sew up again, taking not just a rationed portion of bread, but big pieces, as well as fried bacon and sausage. And so I'd wait for a suitable time—not to play the game again,[19] but to make up for that damned shortage which that mean blind man was causing me.

All that I could pilfer and steal I converted into half-*blanca* coins;[20] and when he was asked to pray and the people gave him *blanca* coins, since he couldn't see, the moment the donor handed one to me, I put it in my mouth[21] and had a half-*blanca* handy; so that, no matter how quickly he reached for it, it was already reduced to half its value at my rate of exchange. The nasty blind man used to complain to me, because he immediately knew and felt by touch that it wasn't a full *blanca,* and he'd say:

"What the devil is this? Ever since you've been with me, they give

18. All three 1554 editions have *cosed*, which must be interpreted as either *coged* or *coced* ("boil"). 19. The Spanish sentence has several untranslatable puns, including terminology from the game of pelota. 20. The *blanca* was a very small denomination; two of them made one *maravedí*. 21. During the act of kissing it in gratitude.

me only half-*blancas,* while previously they gave me a *blanca,* and many times a *maravedí.* This bad luck must be your fault!"

But he, too, used to shorten his prayers, stopping halfway, because he had ordered me to tug at the end of his cloak when the customer started to leave. And I did. Immediately the blind man would start calling out again: "Would you like me to recite such-and-such a prayer?", as their patter goes.

He used to place a little jug of wine at his side when we ate, and I very quickly grabbed it, gave it a couple of quiet "kisses," and put it back where it had been. But it didn't take him long to discover what was missing when he himself drank from it, and, to keep his wine safe, he never again let go of the jug, but held onto it by the handle. But no magnet ever attracted metal as strongly as I attracted that wine through a long rye straw I prepared for that purpose; putting it in the mouth of the jug and sucking out the wine, I left him in the dark with my trick.[22] But that villain was so clever that I think he heard me and, from that time on, he changed his plans, placing the jug between his legs, covering it with one hand, and thus drinking without worries.

Since I had grown used to the wine, I was dying for it; and, seeing that that recourse to the straw was of no use or help to me, it occurred to me to make a little "fountain," a small hole, in the bottom of the jug and to cover it delicately with a very thin layer of wax; at mealtime I would pretend to feel cold and would snuggle between the miserable blind man's legs to warm myself by the wretched little fire we had; as soon as its heat had melted the wax (which there wasn't much of), the little fountain began to trickle into my mouth, which I held in such a way that not a single drop was wasted. When the poor man went to drink, he would find nothing. He used to get frightened, curse himself, and commend the jug and the wine to the Devil, not knowing what could be wrong.

"'Uncle,' you can't say I'm drinking it on you," I would say, "because you don't take your hand off it."

He turned the jug around and felt it so often that he found the hole and realized he had been tricked. But he kept quiet about it just as if he hadn't become aware of it. On the very next day, while I was sucking at the jar in my regular way, unaware of the harm being prepared for me, not knowing that the nasty blind man heard me, I sat down in the usual manner. While I was taking those sweet gulps, with my face

22. A 14th-century Italian manuscript (illuminated in England?) depicts just such a scene, and contains other illustrations of a blind man and his young guide, perhaps based on popular plays of the time.

turned skyward and my eyes slightly closed to heighten my pleasure in the tasty liquid, the frenzied blind man sensed that it was the right moment to avenge himself on me; with all his strength he raised that sweet and bitter jug with both hands and brought it down on my mouth, using maximum force, as I said; so that I, poor Lázaro, suspecting nothing and carefree and happy as in the past, really thought that the sky and everything in it had tumbled down on me.

The little love tap was so hard that it stunned me and knocked me out; the blow with the jug was so strong that the flying pieces dug into my face, cutting it in many places, and broke my teeth, which have been missing to this very day. From that time on, I disliked the nasty blind man; and, even though he liked me, nourished me, and looked after me, I saw all too well that he had been amused by that cruel punishment. He washed out with wine the cuts that the jar fragments had made, and said with a smile:

"What do you think, Lázaro? The same thing that made you ill is curing you and restoring your health." And other jokes that I didn't find funny.

Once I was half-cured of my rotten punishment[23] and bruises, I reflected that with a few more such blows the cruel blind man could get rid of me, and I determined to get rid of *him*; but I didn't do so right away, in order to do it with less harm and more advantage to myself. Even though I wanted to calm down my heart and forgive him for the blow with the jug, I was prevented from doing so by the bad way in which the nasty blind man treated me from that time on; he would hurt me for no reason at all, thumping me on the head and pulling out my hair. If anyone asked him why he was mistreating me that way, he would immediately tell them the story of the jug, saying: "You probably think that this boy of mine is some little innocent. Well, listen and then tell me whether the Devil himself would attempt a deed like this one."

The listeners would cross themselves and say: "Just look! Who'd have thought such a little boy could be so evil!"

And they had a good laugh over the trick, and they told him: "Punish him, punish him, and God will reward you for it."

Hearing that, he never did anything else.

Meanwhile, I always led him over the roughest paths, on purpose, to do him harm and hurt; if there were stones, over them; if there was mud, through the thickest of it, because, even though I myself wasn't walking through the driest spots, I was pleased to put out one of my own eyes in order to put out both of his—and he hadn't any. At the

23. A word play: *negra trepa* can also mean "a black edging" (his bruises).

same time, he constantly poked the back of my neck with the raised end of his cane, and my neck was always full of bumps and plucked by his hands. Even though I swore I wasn't leading him astray maliciously, but couldn't find any better path, that did me no good; he didn't believe me, such was the villain's good sense and great intelligence.

So that Your Honor may see how far this shrewd blind man's cleverness went, I'll narrate one incident among many that I experienced with him, one in which I think he exhibited his great shrewdness clearly. When we left Salamanca, his intention was to head for Toledo territory, because he said the people there had more money, even though they weren't very charitable. He used to cite the proverb: "The hard-hearted man gives more than the destitute one." And we stopped at the best places along that road. Wherever he found a good reception and income, we would linger; otherwise, we would make tracks on the third day.

It happened that, arriving in a town called Almorox[24] at the time of the grape harvest, a vintager gave him a bunch of grapes as alms. Since the baskets are usually roughly handled, and also because the grapes were very ripe at the time, the grapes came right off the stalk in one's hand. If the bunch had been placed in the sack, it would have turned to juice and ruined everything else in there. He decided to make a feast, because he couldn't keep it, and to give me a little pleasure, since on that day he had given me numerous blows with his knees and with his hands. We sat down against a fence, and he said:

"Now I want to be generous to you, like this: Let's both eat this bunch of grapes, with you and me having equal shares. We'll divide it this way: You'll take one bite, then I will, but you must promise me not to eat more than one grape at a time. I'll do the same until we finish, and that way no one will be cheated."

After making that arrangement, we began; but as early as the second round, the villain changed his mind and started eating two at a time, feeling sure that I was doing the same. When I saw that he was breaking our agreement, I wasn't satisfied with keeping up with him, but I even outdid him: I ate them two at a time, three at a time, and any way I could. When the bunch was finished, he remained a while with the bare stalk in his hand, then said, shaking his head:

"Lázaro, you've cheated me; I'll swear to God that you ate the grapes three at a time."

24. All the places between Salamanca and Toledo mentioned in this chapter and the next are real, and really so situated.

"I didn't," I said, "but why do you have that suspicion?"

The immensely wise blind man replied: "Do you know how I can tell that you ate them three at a time? Because I was eating them two at a time, and you didn't say anything."[25]

[To which I made no reply. As we were thus walking beneath some arcades in Escalona, where we were at the time, there were hanging outside a shoemaker's shop many ropes and other things made of esparto grass. Some of them grazed my master's head; raising his hand, he touched them and, recognizing what they were, he said:

"Walk fast, boy, let's not remain amid such bad food, which chokes you even if you don't eat it."

I, who hadn't been paying any attention to that stuff, looked to see what it was, and, seeing nothing but ropes and girths, which weren't edible, I said: "'Uncle,' why do you say that?"

He replied: "Quiet, 'nephew.' To judge by the tricks you play, you'll find out what I mean, and you'll learn I'm telling the truth."

And so we kept walking along the same arcade, and we arrived at an inn, by the door of which many horns were fastened to the wall, for the horse and mule drovers to tie up their animals. As he groped around to learn whether that was the inn where he recited the "prayer of the immured woman"[26] every day for the innkeeper's wife, he took hold of a horn and, sighing deeply, said:

"Oh, you evil thing, even worse than your shape! How many men want to see your name attached to other men's heads, and how few want to possess you or even hear you mentioned in any way!"

When I heard him say that, I said: "'Uncle,' what do you mean?"

"Quiet, 'nephew'; one day what I'm holding in my hand will give you an unpleasant meal and supper."

"I won't eat it," I said, "so it won't."

"I'm telling you the truth; if not, you'll find out, if you live."

And so we walked onward, up to the door of the inn, and I wish to God we had never arrived there, because of what happened to me there.

Most of his prayers were for innkeepers' wives, tavernkeepers' wives, nougat-makers' wives, prostitutes, and suchlike no-account women; I hardly ever saw him reciting prayers for men.]

I laughed to myself and, though still a boy, I took careful note of the blind man's subtle reasoning.

25. The following passage enclosed in square brackets is an interpolation found only in the Alcalá edition (of the three 1554 editions; see Introduction). 26. One of the stock charms for restoring health in the repertoire of blind beggars.

But, so as not to go on too long, I omit the narration of many incidents, both humorous and noteworthy, that I experienced with this first master of mine, and I'll go on to tell about our parting of the ways, and thus bring this section of my story to a close. We were in Escalona, a town in the possession of a duke, and we were staying at an inn, when he gave me a piece of sausage to roast for him. After the grease had oozed from the sausage and we had eaten bread smeared with the grease, he took a *maravedí* out of his purse and sent me to buy wine with it at the tavern. The Devil showed me the opportunity, which makes the thief, as the saying goes, and it was this: Near the fire was a small turnip, longish and damaged, so that it must have been thrown there as being no good for the stewpot.

Since at the moment no one was there but the two of us, and since I found myself leaning toward the sin of gluttony, having inhaled the delicious aroma of the sausage (and knowing that that was all I was going to enjoy of it), I paid no heed to what might befall me and I set aside all my fears in order to achieve my desire. While the blind man was taking the money out of his purse, I removed the sausage and very speedily put the above-mentioned turnip on the spit. After giving me the money for the wine, my master took the spit and started turning it over the fire, wishing to roast something that had escaped being boiled on account of its defects.

I went for the wine, and after I got it, it didn't take me long to polish off the sausage. When I returned I found the blind sinner holding the turnip pressed between two slices of bread; he hadn't recognized it because he hadn't touched it with his hands. When he took the sandwich and bit into it, thinking he was also getting some of the sausage, he remained dumbfounded with that dumb turnip. He got upset and said: "What's this, Lazarillo?"

"Woe is me!"[27] I said. "Are you actually trying to blame me? Didn't I just get back with the wine? Someone must have been here who did this as a joke."

"No, no," he said, "because I never let the spit out of my hand. It's impossible."

I continued to swear up and down that I was innocent of that swap and exchange; but it did me little good, because nothing could be concealed from that damned blind man's cunning. He got up and grabbed me by the head and came up close, in order to smell me. And since he must have smelled my breath, like a good hunting dog, in order to get closer to the truth and because he was suffering such great anxiety, he

27. The Spanish has a pun on *Lazarillo* and *lacerado*.

grabbed me with his hands, opened my mouth much too wide, and carelessly thrust in his nose, which was long and sharp and which his vexation had made a span longer at the moment, so that its tip reached to my epiglottis.

Because of this and because of my great fear and the shortness of the time that had elapsed, the damned sausage had not yet settled in my stomach. Most of all, I was half-choking because of the lack of moderation of that most abundant nose.[28] All of these things combined, and brought it about that my deed and my greed became clear, and everything was returned to its lawful owner: because, before the nasty blind man removed his snout from my mouth, my stomach became so queasy that the stolen goods assailed it, so that his nose and the damned, badly chewed sausage came out of my mouth at one and the same time.

Oh, great God, how I wished I were already buried at that moment, because I was definitely already a dead man! The evil blind man's anger was so great that, if people hadn't come running when they heard the racket, I don't think he would have spared my life. I was wrenched out of his hands, which remained full of those few hairs I still had on my head; my face was scratched, and my neck and throat all torn up. And my throat deserved it, because it was for its wickedness that I had received such a great punishment.

The nasty blind man kept recounting my misfortunes to everyone who arrived there, and he repeatedly informed them of my ruse with the jug, the one with the grapes, and this current one. Everyone laughed so loud that all the people passing by on the street came in to view the celebration; but the blind man went on recounting my exploits with such humor and wit that, even though I was so manhandled, and weeping over it, I felt I was being unjust not to laugh over them.

While this was going on, it occurred to me that I had been cowardly and weak, and I cursed myself for it. Why hadn't I left him without a nose, since I had had such a good opportunity to do so, seeing it had already gone halfway? Merely by bearing down with my teeth,[29] I would have kept it with me, and, even though it belonged to that villain, my stomach might have kept it down better than the sausage; since the nose would no longer have been visible as evidence, I could

28. Or: "the discourtesy of that very polite nose." Other translations, such as "disturbance" and "excess," have been suggested for the very rare word *destiento*. 29. Lázaro was most likely exaggerating earlier when he said that the blow with the jug knocked out his teeth, or else he meant only a few teeth, because he makes much use of his dentition in the rest of the novel.

have denied any accusation. I wish to God I had done it, because it wouldn't have made any difference in my situation.[30]

We were reconciled by the innkeeper's wife and the bystanders, and with the wine I had brought him to drink they washed my face and throat. The nasty blind man supplied a counterpoint of jokes to this operation, saying:

"To tell the truth, I use more wine each year in washing this boy than I drink in two. At any rate, Lázaro, you owe more to wine than you do to your father, because he begot you only once, but the wine has given you life a thousand times."

And then he told them how often he had injured my head and lacerated my face, which he would then heal with wine.

"I tell you," he said to me, "that if anyone in the world is destined to have luck with wine, it's you."

And those who were washing me had a good laugh at that, even though I protested. But the blind man's prediction wasn't false, and since then I have frequently recalled that man, who must surely have had the spirit of prophecy, and I feel sorry for the troubles I caused him, although I paid dearly for them, when I reflect on the accuracy of what he told me that day, as Your Honor will hear later on.

Considering this and the nasty tricks the blind man played on me, I decided definitely to leave him; it had been on my mind and in my wishes, and after this last game he played with me, I became more determined. And so, the very next day we set out to beg alms in town; it had rained hard the night before, and, since it was raining during the day as well, he was walking along reciting prayers beneath certain arcades located in that town, where we didn't get wet. But when night was approaching and the rain didn't stop, the blind man said to me: "Lázaro, this rain shows no sign of letting up, and it gets stronger the closer we get to nighttime; let's take shelter in the inn while we have time."

To get there we had to pass a stream that was swollen with the heavy rain. I said: "'Uncle,' the stream is very wide; but, if you like, I see a place where we can cross it more quickly without getting wet, because it becomes very narrow there and we can avoid wetting our feet if we jump over it."

It sounded like good advice to him, and he said: "You're thoughtful, and that's why I like you. Take me to that spot where the stream

30. Numerous other translations have been suggested for the uncommon expression *así que así*.

narrows, because it's wintertime and the water isn't attractive, especially when you get your feet wet."

Seeing the opportune nature of the situation, I led him out from under the arcade and brought him straight to a stone pillar or post that stood in the square, one of those on which the overhangs of the houses rested, and I said: "'Uncle,' this is the narrowest spot in the whole stream."

Since it was raining hard and the miserable man was getting wet, and since we were in a hurry to get out of the water that was falling on us, but especially because God blinded his intelligence at that moment, in order to avenge me for what he had done to me, he believed me, and said: "Point me in the right direction, and then jump over the stream yourself."

I placed him directly in front of the post, gave a jump, and hid behind the post like a man awaiting a bull's head-butt. Then I said: "Come on! Jump as hard as you can, to get on this side of the stream."

I had scarcely finished saying this when the poor blind man hurled himself forward like a billy-goat, charging with all his might and taking a step backward from his course in order to jump higher. He rammed his head against the post, which made a sound as loud as if it had been struck by a big pumpkin. He immediately fell backward, half dead, with his head split open.

"What? You smelled the sausage and not the post? Smell! Smell!" I said to him.

And I left him in the hands of a number of people who had run up to help him. I dashed out of the town gate at a trot, and before nightfall I reached Torrijos. I never found out what God had done with him, nor was I interested in finding out.

CHAPTER TWO

How Lázaro Was Employed by a Priest, and of the Things That Befell Him in His Company

The next day, not considering myself safe there, I went to a town called Maqueda, where, to pay for my sins, I came across a priest who, when I went up to him to beg for alms, asked me if I knew how to serve as an altar boy. I said yes, which was true, because, even though he mistreated me, that blind sinner had taught me a thousand useful things, and this was one. Finally the priest took me into his service.

I had escaped from the frying pan into the fire,[31] because in comparison with this priest, the blind man was as generous as Alexander the Great, even though he was the embodiment of miserliness, as I've told you. I merely state that all the stinginess in the world was contained in this priest, whether it was inborn in him or he had acquired it along with his clerical cloth.

He possessed an old strongbox, locked with a key that he wore tied to his scapular-like cape with a metal-tipped belt. When the rich loaves of bread that had been offered in church for his use were brought to the house, he immediately put them in that box personally and locked the box again. Nowhere in the house was there anything to eat, as there generally is in others: some bacon hanging in the fireplace hood, some cheese lying on a shelf or in the cupboard, some basket with a few pieces of bread left over from the table. It seems to me that, even if I didn't have access to them, the sight of them would have consoled me.

There was merely a string of onions, and that locked away, too, in a room on the top floor. My ration was one of these every four days; when I asked him for the key to go get one, if someone else was present he would lay hold of the purse that hung on his breast and, very gravely, would take out the key and give it to me, saying: "Here, but come right back and don't hang around snacking."

As if that room contained all the fruit preserves of Valencia, although, as I said, there wasn't a single thing in it but the onions hanging on a nail! And he kept such a careful count of them that if, for my deadly sins, I had recklessly helped myself to more than my normal portion, it would have cost me dear. In short, my life was being cut short by hunger.

But if he showed me scant charity, he showed himself more. His daily ration for dinner and supper was five *blancas'* worth of meat. True, he shared the broth with me. As for the meat, out of the question! I got just a little bread, and I wish to God it had been even half of what I needed!

In that region people eat sheeps' heads on Saturdays, and he used to send me for one that cost three *maravedís*. He would boil it and eat the eyes, tongue, neck, brains, and the meat clinging to the jawbones. He would give me all the bones after he had gnawed them, handing them to me on the platter with the words: "Here, eat and rejoice, because the world is yours: you're better off than the Pope!"

"God give you such a life!" I would say quietly to myself.

At the end of three weeks with him, I had become so thin that my

31. Literally: "from the thunder into the lightning."

legs wouldn't hold me up, I was so hungry. I saw myself clearly headed for the grave, unless God and my brains helped me out. I had no opportunity to employ my ruses, because there was nothing to steal; even if there had been, I couldn't put blinders on him, as I did with my first master (may God forgive him, if he died of that knock on the head), who after all, though he was so clever, couldn't see me because he lacked that precious sense. But as for this new master, no one was as sharp-sighted as he was.

When we were collecting money in church, no *blanca* fell into the plate[32] that he didn't register: he kept one eye on the people and the other on my hands. His eyes danced around in his skull as if they were quicksilver. He kept count of every *blanca* in the offering, and when the offering was over, he immediately took the plate away from me and placed it on the altar.

I wasn't able to get hold of a *blanca* the whole time that I lived with him, or died with him, to be more exact. I never brought him a *blanca*'s worth of wine from the tavern; instead, he measured out the little that he received at the offering so carefully that it lasted him all week. To conceal his enormous stinginess, he used to say to me: "You see, boy, priests have to be very moderate in eating and drinking, and that's why I don't indulge myself like other people." But the wretch was lying in his teeth, because at the meetings of religious societies and at the funerals where we prayed, if someone else was paying, he used to eat like a wolf and drink more than a faith healer.[33]

And since I have mentioned funerals, may God forgive me, because I've never been an enemy of the human race except at that time; and this was because we ate well and I got filled up. I used to wish, and even pray to God, that someone would die every day. And when we gave sacraments to the sick, especially Extreme Unction, when the priest orders everyone present to pray, I was definitely not the last to join in the prayer. With all my heart and will I prayed the Lord, not to take notice of the prayer in the way that best suited His purposes, but to remove the sick person from this world. And when one of them recovered (God forgive me), I wished a thousand times that the Devil would take him. Anyone who died received that same number of blessings from me. Because in the whole time I remained there, which would be nearly six months, only twenty people died, and I'm

32. Literally: "shell." The word for "plate" later in this paragraph seems to mean a clerical cap, but *corneta* may be a typographical error for *concheta* ("little shell"). 33. Faith healers apparently drank a lot because they used a lot of their own saliva in their cures.

sure that I was the one who killed them—or, to be more exact, that they died at my request. Because I think that when the Lord saw how ravenously hungry I always was, He was pleased to kill them to give life to me.

But I was unable to find any remedy for my suffering at that time, because, if I lived on days when we buried someone, on days without a victim, since I had grown accustomed to filling my belly, I felt my daily hunger all the more when I returned to it. So that I saw no possible relief except in death, which I sometimes wished for myself as well as for others; but I couldn't find it, even though it was always inside me.

Often I thought about abandoning that stingy master, but I refrained for two reasons. The first was that I didn't trust my legs for fear of the weakness that came from hunger alone. The second was that I reflected: "I've had two masters: the first one kept me dead of hunger, and, when I left him, I ran across this one, who has nearly brought me to my grave with it. Now, if I leave this one and wind up with one of lower quality, what will it mean but my doom?" And so I didn't dare make a move, because I was convinced that every step would lead downward to something worse. And if I moved just a jot lower, the name of Lázaro would be buried in silence, never again to be heard in the world.

Well, while I was in this distress (from which may the Lord deliver all faithful Christians) and unable to work out any plan, seeing myself go from bad to worse, one day, when that unhappy, evil, wretched master of mine had gone out of town, by chance there came to my door a tinker, who I think was an angel sent to me by the hand of God in that guise. He asked me if I had anything to mend. "You'd find plenty to do if you wanted to mend me, and you'd be doing plenty if you helped me out," I said quietly, without his hearing.

But since there was no time to waste in telling jokes, I said to him, enlightened by the Holy Spirit: "'Uncle,' I've lost a key of this type,[34] and I'm afraid my master will flog me. By your life, see whether among those you're carrying on you there's one that fits, and I'll pay you for it."

The angelic tinker began trying out one after another in the big bunch he was carrying, and I began helping him with my feeble prayers. Unexpectedly, I caught sight of the "face of God," as the saying is—that is, the loaves of bread—inside the box. When it was open, I said: "I have no money to give you for the key, but take your payment out of this."

34. Reading with other texts: "a key for this strongbox."

He took one of those rich loaves, the one that looked best to him, and, giving me my key, departed in great satisfaction, leaving me alone. But for the moment I didn't touch a thing, so that the shortage wouldn't be noticed. Besides, since I found that I was the owner of so much property, I felt as if hunger didn't dare assail me. My wretched master returned, and God willed that he failed to notice the offering loaf that the angel had taken.

The next day, when he left the house, I opened my breadly paradise, took a loaf in my hand and between my teeth, and made it invisible in the time it takes to recite the Apostles' Creed twice. I didn't forget to close the box. Starting to sweep the house in great glee, I felt that by that means I had bettered my sad life from that time forward. And I remained happy over it that day and the next. But my luck didn't allow that relief to last long for me, because right away, on the third day, I got a real case of tertian fever.[35]

It was like this: at an ill, unexpected moment I saw the man who was killing me with hunger bent over our strongbox, turning the loaves over and over and counting them again and again. Pretending ignorance, I kept saying in my silent prayers, devotions, and orisons: "Saint John, blind him!"

After he had stood there toting up the account for quite a while, reckoning up the days and counting on his fingers, he said: "If I didn't keep such a close watch on this box, I'd say that loaves have been taken out of it. But from today on, merely to shut the door on suspicion, I intend to keep a strict accounting of them. There are nine left and a piece."

"May God send you bad tidings!"[36] I said to myself. At his words I felt as if my heart had been pierced with a huntsman's heavy arrow, and my stomach began gnawing with hunger, finding itself restored to its past diet. He left the house. To console myself, I opened the box and, at sight of the bread, I began to worship it, since I didn't dare to receive it.[37] I counted the loaves to see if that wretch might have been mistaken, but I found his count more accurate than I liked. The most I could do was to give them a thousand kisses; and, as carefully as I could, I removed a little from the cut piece along the line of the cut. With it I spent that day, which wasn't as merry as the one before.

But as my hunger increased, especially because my stomach had become used to more bread on those above-mentioned two or three days, I was dying a miserable death; so much so, that whenever I found myself alone, all I did was open and shut the box and contem-

35. Which was treated by fasting. 36. The Spanish has an untranslatable word play on *nueve* ("nine") and *nuevas* ("tidings"). 37. The terminology is that of Communion.

plate that "face of God," as children call it. But God Himself, who aids the afflicted, seeing me in such straits, recalled to my mind a small relief: I reflected on the situation and said: "This box is big, old, and broken in several spots, even though the holes are small. It might be thought that mice are getting in and damaging this bread. To take it out in one piece isn't appropriate, because the man who gives me such short measure will see the shortage. This way is tolerable."

And I began to crumble the bread onto some none-too-costly tablecloths that were on hand, taking one loaf and leaving another, in such a way that I crumbled away a little bit from each of three or four of them. Then, like someone enjoying fancy preserves,[38] I ate the crumbs and cheered up a little. But when he was ready for dinner and opened the box, he observed the misfortune, and certainly believed that mice had done the damage, because I had imitated in a very natural way their manner of doing so. He looked at the entire box from one end to the other, and saw certain holes through which he suspected they had got in. He called me over and said: "Lázaro! Look, see what an infliction our bread suffered last night!"

I pretended to be greatly surprised, asking him what it could be.

"What it can be!" he said. "Mice, which don't spare a thing."

We started to eat, and God willed that even that was to my benefit, because more bread fell to my lot than the pittance he ordinarily gave me, since with a knife he scraped away everything he thought was mouse-eaten, saying: "Eat this, for mice are clean animals."

And so, that day, adding in the portion due to the work of my hands (or my fingernails, to be more exact), we finished dining, although I generally never even began.

And right away I got another scare: I saw him go around busily removing nails from the walls and looking for little boards, which he nailed to the old box, closing up all the holes.

"Oh, Lord!" I then said. "How much misery, misfortune, and disaster we mortals are exposed to, and how brief a time the pleasures in this laborious life of ours last! Here I was, thinking that, by this poor, wretched means, I could relieve and bear my hunger, and I was a little cheerful and fortunate. But my bad luck wouldn't allow it: it woke up my stingy master and made him even more careful than he was by nature (for misers are generally never lacking in such solicitude), so that now, by closing the holes in the box, he is closing the door to my solace and opening it to my travails."

38. Or: "sugar-coated almonds."

That is how I lamented while my industrious carpenter, with all those nails and boards, completed his work and said: "Now, my lords, you villainous mice, you've got to change your plan, because you won't prosper in this house."

After he went out, I went over to examine the job he had done, and I found that he hadn't left in the miserable old box a hole big enough for even a gnat to get in. I opened it with my now superfluous key, with no hope of deriving any benefit, and looked at the two or three tampered-with loaves, the ones my master thought were mouse-eaten; I was still able to remove a tiny amount from them, handling them very gently, like a skillful fencer. Since necessity is such a great teacher, finding myself in the midst of it, I kept pondering day and night on the means to stay alive. And I believe that, if I discovered those puny solutions, it was because hunger enlightened me, for they say that it sharpens a man's wits, and a full belly does the opposite; and it was certainly so in my case.

Well, lying awake with these thoughts one night, thinking of ways to help myself and take advantage of the box, I noticed that my master was asleep, since he indicated it with his snoring and the heavy breaths he took while sleeping. I got up very quietly; having imagined during the day what I needed to do, and having left an old knife that was on hand in a place where I could find it, I went up to that miserable box and, in the spot where I had noticed it was least protected, I attacked it with the knife, which I used like a drill. And since I found the very old box, with all those years on its head, without strength or courage to resist, but rather very soft and worm-eaten, it surrendered to me at once and allowed me to bore a good-sized hole in its side, for my relief. Having done this, I opened the wounded box and, by touch, I subjected the loaves that I found already started to the manipulations I described earlier. Consoling myself with that to some extent, I locked the box again and returned to my straw pallet, where I rested and slept a little. I slept badly, blaming this on my hunger. And it must have been so, because at that age even the worries of the king of France[39] shouldn't have robbed me of my sleep.

The next day, the damage was seen by my lord and master, both the nibbled bread and the hole I had made; he started wishing that the

39. Probably just a general expression, but some commentators have thought this was a specific reference to the imprisonment of François I after losing the battle of Pavia in 1525. These commentators then drew corresponding conclusions as to the time when *Lazarillo de Tormes* was written, or when the action of the story takes place, or both.

mice would go to the Devil, and said: "What can I say about this? I never noticed mice in this house until now!" And he must surely have been telling the truth, because if any house in the kingdom should have been rightly spared by them, that one should have been by rights because they usually don't live where there's nothing to eat. Again he looked for nails in the house and on the walls and boards to cover the hole. When night came and he fell asleep, I was immediately on my feet, seizing my opportunity, and as many holes as he covered by day I uncovered at night.

In this manner, it was surely because we acted with such urgency that the saying arose: "When one door closes, another opens." In short, we seemed to be doing piecework on Penelope's web, because all that he wove in the daytime I undid at night; in a few days and nights we had reduced the poor breadbox to such a state that anyone wishing to describe it accurately would have called it an old piece of armor from ancient days, rather than a strongbox, it was so full of nails and studs.

Once he had seen that his remedy wasn't helping him at all, he said: "This strongbox has been so manhandled, and its wood is so old and weak that it won't be able to withstand any mouse. It's already in such bad shape that, if we do any more to it, it will leave us without protection. Even worse is this: as little protection as it affords, even that will be gone if the box goes, and I'd have to spend three or four *reales* to replace it. The best solution I can think of, since none have worked so far, is to put a trap inside to catch these damned mice."

At once he sought the loan of a mousetrap and, with cheese rinds that he asked the neighbors for, the mechanical "cat" was constantly at the ready inside the box. This was remarkably advantageous to me, because, even though I didn't need fancy sauces to raise an appetite, nevertheless I was happy to have the cheese rinds that I took out of the mousetrap and, in addition, I didn't leave off "nibbling" at the bread.

On finding the bread "mouse-eaten," the cheese devoured, but no trace of the mouse who was eating it, he became furious and asked the neighbors how it could be that the cheese was eaten and removed from the mousetrap while the mouse wasn't caught and captured although the trap was sprung. The neighbors opined that it wasn't a mouse that was doing this damage, because it would surely have been caught one time or another. A neighbor told him:

"I recall that a snake used to roam around in your house, and the snake must surely be doing this. It stands to reason that, being long, it's able to snatch the bait and, even though the trap snaps shut on it, it can get out again because it's not completely inside."

Everyone agreed with that man's opinion, which greatly upset my master; from then on he no longer slept so soundly, but whenever he heard any termite making a sound at night, he thought it was the snake gnawing his box. He was up on his feet at once, and with a cudgel that he kept at the head of his bed ever since the neighbors had told him that, he would deal the wretched box heavy blows, thinking he was frightening the snake. He used to wake up the neighbors with the racket he made, and he didn't let me sleep, either. He would come up to my straw pallet and turn it over, and me with it, imagining that the snake was coming to me and concealing itself in my pallet or my shirt, because they told him that at night those animals, in search of warmth, sometimes entered cradles containing infants, whom they might even bite, causing them danger.

Most of the time I pretended to be asleep, and in the morning he'd say: "Boy, didn't you notice anything last night? I was searching for the snake, and I even think it must get in bed with you, because they suffer from the cold and look for warm places."

"I hope to God it doesn't bite me," I would say, "because I'm scared stiff of it."

And so, he went around so distraught and deprived of sleep that, by my faith, the snake (a male snake, to be exact) didn't dare gnaw at night or climb up to the box; but in the daytime, while he was in church or in town, I continued my pilfering. Seeing this damage and the uselessness of his countermeasures, he went around at night like a poltergeist, as I've said.

I was afraid that, with all the pains he was taking, he might find my key, which I kept in the straw of my pallet, and I thought it was safer to keep it in my mouth at night. Ever since my days with the blind man, I had converted my mouth into such an ample purse that at times I had twelve or fifteen *maravedís'* worth of half-*blancas* in it, without having any trouble eating, because otherwise I couldn't hold onto a *blanca* without that damned blind man finding it, since he frequently searched every seam and patch on me.

Well, as I said, every night I put the key in my mouth and slept without the fear of my sorcerer master finding it; but when misfortune is slated, prudence is futile. My destiny (or, to be more exact, my sins) willed that, one night as I lay asleep, the key assumed such a position in my mouth, which must have been open, that the air and breath I exhaled in my sleep emerged through the hollow of the key, which had a tubular stem, and it whistled very loud, as my unlucky star would have it, so that my startled master heard it and must surely have

taken it for the hissing of the snake; and, no doubt, it must have sounded like it.

He got up very quietly, his cudgel in his hand, and, groping his way in the direction of the snake's hiss, he came up to me, keeping very still so the snake wouldn't hear him. When he found he was close, he imagined it had sought the warmth of my body in the pallet where I was lying. Raising his cudgel high in the air, thinking the snake was at his feet and intending to give it a blow strong enough to kill it, with all his might he delivered such a hard blow to my head that he left me unconscious and with a battered head.

When he sensed that he had struck me, since I must have reacted violently to that fierce blow, he realized that I was the one he had hit, and, calling my name out loud, he tried to bring me to. But when he touched me, he felt all the blood that was pouring out of me and he became aware of how badly he had injured me. In great haste he went to get a light; returning with it, he found me moaning, with the key still in my mouth, because I had never lost hold of it. It was protruding halfway, just as it must have been when I whistled through it.

The snake hunter, worried over what that key could be, looked at it, removing it entirely from my mouth, and recognized it for what it was, since its wards were no different from those on his own. He went at once to try it out, and with it he ascertained the true nature of the evil spell he had been under. The cruel hunter must have said: "I have found the mouse and the snake that were waging war on me and eating my property."

Since I spent the next three days "in the belly of the whale," all I will recount about what happened during that time is what I heard my master say after I came to, because he narrated the whole thing in detail to every visitor.[40]

At the end of three days I was conscious again, and I found myself stretched out on my pallet, my head all plastered and full of oils and ointments. Frightened, I said: "What's this?"

The cruel priest replied: "I assure you I've driven away the mice and snakes that were eating me out of house and home." I looked at myself and saw myself in such a bad condition that I immediately guessed at my misfortune.

At that moment, a female quack doctor and the neighbors came in. They began to remove cloths from my head and tend to the cudgel

40. This involved sentence has also been interpreted differently, but the general sense is clear.

wound. Since they found me in my senses again, they were very pleased and said: "Since he's awake again, God willing, it won't be serious."

Then they began telling of my troubles again and laughing at them, while I, the sinner, bewailed them. Nevertheless, they gave me some food—I was absolutely starved—but they were scarcely able to serve my turn.[41] And so, little by little, in two weeks I became strong enough to get up and be out of danger (but not free from hunger) and half-cured.

The very day after I got out of bed, my lord and master took me by the hand and led me out the door. Once I was in the street, he said:

"Lázaro, from today on, you belong to yourself and not to me. Look for a master and go with God. Because I don't want such a diligent servant to keep me company. There isn't the slightest doubt that you've been a blind man's helper."

He crossed himself at the sight of me, as if I were devil-ridden, went back into his house, and locked his door.

CHAPTER THREE

How Lázaro Was Employed by a Nobleman, and What Happened to Him in His Company

And so I was strongly compelled to derive strength from weakness; little by little, with the aid of kind people, I arrived in this famous city of Toledo, where, with the grace of God, my wound healed completely in two further weeks. While I was still sick, I always received a little alms, but after I was well, everyone said to me: "You're a cadger and a panhandler. Look for a master to serve."

"And where am I to find one," I said to myself, "unless God creates one now out of whole cloth, the way He created the world?"

As I was scurrying this way from door to door, receiving mighty little aid (because charity has now retreated to the skies), God made me meet a squire who was walking in the street, reasonably well dressed, well groomed, and with an elegant pace and bearing. He looked at me, and I at him, and he said: "Boy, are you searching for a master?"

I replied: "Yes, sir."

41. Another 1554 edition has *demediar* ("to give me even half of what I needed").

"Then follow me," he answered, "for God has shown you grace by making you meet me; you must have recited some good prayer today."

I followed him, thanking God for what I heard him say, and also because, seeing his attire and bearing, I thought he was the master I needed.

It was in the morning when I met this third master of mine; he led me after him through a large part of the city. We passed through the squares where bread and other provisions were sold. I kept thinking (and wishing) that he would load me down there with the food that was for sale, because it was the right time, when people usually lay in supplies; but he passed by such spots with huge strides. "Maybe he doesn't see what he likes here," I said to myself, "and he wants us to buy it elsewhere."

We continued that way until the clock struck eleven. Then he entered the cathedral and I followed. I saw him hear Mass and the other religious services very piously, until it was all over and the people were gone. Then we left the church; we started to descend a street at a good clip. As I walked, I was the happiest person in the world, when I saw that we had spent no time looking for food. I imagined that my new master must be a man who purchased foodstuffs in quantity, and that our dinner would be ready for us, and of the sort I wished and, in fact, needed.

At that moment the clock struck 1 P.M., and we arrived at a house in front of which my master stopped, as I did, too. Throwing back one corner of his cloak over his left shoulder, he drew a key out of his sleeve and opened his door, and we went in. The entrance to the house was so dark and gloomy that I thought it must frighten anyone coming in, even though inside it there was a small patio and decent rooms.

Once we were inside, he took off his cloak; after he asked me if my hands were clean, we shook it out and folded it, and, blowing the dust off a stone bench there, he placed it on it very neatly. After that, he sat down beside it and asked me in great detail where I was from and how I had come to that city. I gave him a longer account than I liked, because I thought it was a more suitable hour for ordering the table to be set and the stew to be dished out than to do what he demanded of me. Anyway, I satisfied him as to my personal qualities, lying as much as I could, declaring my good points and keeping quiet about the rest, because I thought it might be impolite or inopportune. After that, he remained there for a while, which I immediately took as a bad sign, because it was now nearly two and I didn't see him anymore

eager to eat than a dead man. Next, I reflected on the fact that he kept the door locked, and that I couldn't hear the steps of a living soul in the house upstairs or downstairs. All I had seen was bare walls; the house didn't contain a chair, a stool, a bench, a table, or even a strongbox like my last master's. In short, it seemed to be under a spell. While we were that way, he said: "Boy, have you dined?"

"No, sir," I said, "because it wasn't even eight when I met Your Honor."

"Well, even though it was early in the morning, I had already breakfasted, and when I eat something that way, let me tell you that it holds me until nighttime. And so, get along as best you can, because we'll have supper later on."

Your Honor may well believe that, when I heard him say this, I came close to fainting away, not so much from hunger as from the realization that Fortune was thoroughly hostile to me. Then I recalled all my troubles, and I began to lament my suffering again; then I remembered the reflection I had made when I considered abandoning the priest: even though he was disastrous and wretched, I might come across someone worse. In short, at that moment I bewailed my sorrowful past life and my imminent death. Nevertheless, hiding my feelings as much as I could, I said:

"Sir, I'm a boy who doesn't worry much about eating, thank God; among all my peers I can boast of being the least gluttonous, and I've been praised for that to this very day by my different masters."

"That's a virtue," he said, "and I'll like you all the better for it: because it's only pigs that stuff themselves, while decent people eat moderately."

"I hear you coming!" I said to myself. "Damn the healthfulness and the virtue that the masters whom I find find in hunger!"

I went and stood at one end of the entrance hall and took out of my shirt front a few pieces of bread left over from the alms I had received. Seeing this, he said: "Come here, boy. What are you eating?"

I walked up to him and showed him the bread. He took a piece from me, the best and biggest of the three I had, and said: "Upon my life, this looks like good bread."

"And how good it is now!" I said.

"Yes, by my faith," said he. "Where did you get it? Was it kneaded by clean hands?"

"I don't know about that," I said, "but the taste of it doesn't disgust *me*."

"So may it please God," said my poor master. And, raising it to his mouth, he started to take the same wild bites out of it as I was doing out of the other piece. "By God, it's very tasty bread," he said.

Now that I realized where his weakness lay,[42] I began to rush, because I saw that, if he finished before I did, his mood was such that he would venture to help me with whatever I had left. And so we finished at nearly the same time. My master began to brush off a few tiny crumbs that had fallen onto his chest. Then he went into a little room there and brought out a jug with a chipped rim and not very new; after taking a drink from it, he offered me one. Pretending to be a teetotaler, I said: "Sir, I don't drink wine."

"It's water," he replied, "you can go ahead and drink it."

Then I took the jug and drank. Not much, because it wasn't thirst that was bothering me.

And so we remained until nightfall, discussing things he asked me about, while I gave the best answers I could. Then he led me into the room where the jug was that we drank out of, and he said: "Boy, stop here and watch how we make this bed, so you can do it from now on."

I stood at one end and he at the other, and we made that wretched bed, in which there wasn't much to make, because it consisted of a lattice of reeds placed on some benches. Over the reeds was placed the mattress, which, because it wasn't washed very regularly, didn't look like one though it was used as one; it was stuffed with far less wool than it required. We spread it out, imagining that we were softening it; but that was impossible, because hardness can't very well be transformed into softness. That devil of a mattress had hardly anything inside it, so that, when it was placed over the reed lattice, every individual reed stood out, the whole thing resembling an emaciated pig's backbone. And over that famished mattress, a blanket of the same kind, the color of which I couldn't make out.

When the bed was made and night had come, he said: "Lázaro, it's late now, and it's a long way from here to the market; besides, there are many robbers in this city who steal people's cloaks at night. Let's get through the night as best we can, and tomorrow, when it's light, God will be gracious to us; because, since I live alone, I have no food in the house; in fact, the last few days I've eaten out; but now we have to make different arrangements."

"Sir," I said, "Your Honor need have no worries about *me*, because

42. Literally: "which foot he limped on" (*cosquear* = modern *cojear*).

I'm well able to get through one night, and even more if necessary, without eating."

"You'll live longer and feel better," he replied, "because, as we were saying today, there's nothing in the world that prolongs life like eating frugally."

"If that's the way to do it," I said to myself, "I'll never die, because I've always been compelled to observe that rule, and I'm so unlucky that I expect to observe it as long as I live."

He lay down on the bed, using his breeches and doublet as a pillow. He ordered me to stretch out at his feet, which I did. But I'll be damned if I could sleep, because all night long the reeds and my protruding bones didn't stop fighting and arguing, since with my sorrows, misfortunes, and hunger I don't think there was a pound of flesh on my body. Besides, since I had eaten almost nothing all that day, I felt a ravenous hunger, which is no friend to sleep. I cursed myself a thousand times (may God forgive me for it) and I cursed my evil fortune, most of the night; the worst thing was that I didn't dare turn over so as not to wake him, and I asked God over and over to end my life.

When morning came, we got up and he started to clean and shake out his breeches, doublet, tunic, and cloak. I could only help him in trifling ways. He got dressed very much at his ease, slowly. I poured water over his hands, he combed, and attached his sword to his sword belt; while doing that, he said:

"Boy, if you only knew what a blade this is! I wouldn't exchange it for any half-pound of gold in the world, because, you see, in none of the ones that Antonio[43] made was he able to make the steel as responsive as in this one."

He drew it from its scabbard and touched its edge, saying: "Look here. I wager I could slice a tuft of wool with it."

I said to myself: "And even though my teeth aren't made of steel, I could cut through a four-pound loaf with them."

He returned the sword to its scabbard and girded it on, also hanging a rosary of thick beads from the sword belt. Then, at a calm pace, holding his body erect and moving it and his head very genteelly, throwing the end of his cloak over his shoulder and at times over his arm, and placing his right hand on his side, he went out the door, saying:

"Lázaro, look after the house while I go hear Mass, and make the bed, and go fill the water jug at the river, which is just below here; and

43. A famous swordsmith from the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella.

lock the door so nothing gets stolen, and put the key here in the door jamb, so that I can get in if I should arrive while you're out."

And up the street he went, with such a noble appearance and bearing that anyone who didn't know him would have thought he was a near relation of the Count of Arcos,[44] or at least the manservant who helped him dress.

"Blessings on You, Lord," I said as I remained behind, "for You send the illness and supply the cure. Who wouldn't think, meeting my master and seeing him so self-satisfied, that he had had a good supper last night and slept in a good bed, and that he had had a wonderful breakfast, early in the morning as it is? Lord, there are great mysteries that You perform and that people are unaware of! Who wouldn't be fooled by his good mood and his respectable cloak and tunic? And who would think that that gentleman spent all of yesterday eating nothing but that hard crust which his servant Lázaro had been carrying for a day and a night in the strongbox of his shirt front, where it couldn't have gotten too clean, or that today, when he washed his hands and face, he dried himself with the skirt of his tunic for want of a towel? Surely no one would suspect it. Oh, Lord, how many people like that you must have scattered around the world, who suffer on behalf of that misery they call honor things that they wouldn't suffer on Your behalf!"

I stood at the door that way, reflecting and pondering over these matters and many more, until my lord and master crossed the long, narrow street; and when I saw him disappear from sight, I went back into the house. In the time it takes to recite the Creed, I combed it all, upstairs and down, without stopping[45] or finding anything. I made the damned hard bed, and I took the jug and went to the river with it. In an orchard there I saw my master ardently wooing two women whose faces were concealed by their mantillas, and who seemed to be of the sort found in great numbers at that spot. In fact, many of them consider it fashionable on early mornings in summer to visit that cool riverbank to take the air and have breakfast, bringing along no money, because they're sure of finding someone to pay for it, since the local noblemen have accustomed them to it.

As I said, he was standing among them like a great lover,[46] telling them more sweet nothings than Ovid composed. When they realized

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44. Another 1554 edition reads *Alarcos*, and some editors, believing that the "manservant" refers to a specific ballad (*romance*), read *Claros*. 45. Or: "seizing prey"; or: "finding a source for increasing my supplies." 46. Literally: "like Macías," a 14th-century Galician troubadour said to have died of love.

he was really amorous, they felt no shame in asking him to give them breakfast in return for the usual compensation.

He, realizing that his purse was as cold as his belly was hot, was seized with such a shiver that his face turned pale and he began to get tongue-tied and make feeble excuses. The women must have been very experienced, and when they realized what ailed him, they left him, knowing him for what he was.[47]

I had been making my breakfast on a few cabbage stalks; now, very diligently as befitting a new servant, I went back home without my master seeing me. I intended to sweep a part of the house, which really needed it, but I couldn't find anything to do it with. I started to think about what I should do, and I decided to await my master until midday, thinking he might come and perhaps bring something for us to eat. But my experiment was in vain.

When I saw that it was two o'clock and he wasn't coming, and I was feeling hunger pangs, I locked the door, put the key where he had told me, and returned to my first profession. With a weak, sick voice and my hands resting on my breast, with God before my eyes and His name on my tongue, I started to beg for bread at doorways and the houses I thought were richest. Since I had learned that business at my mother's knee (I mean, I was taught it by that great master, the blind man), I proved to be such an apt pupil that, even though the local people weren't charitable and it hadn't been a year of plenty, I exerted myself so successfully that before the clock struck four I had stored away that number of pounds of bread in my stomach, and over two pounds more in my sleeves and shirt front. I returned home and, while walking through the Tripería,[48] I begged from one of the women there, who gave me a piece of cow's foot with a little more boiled offal.

When I got home, my good master was already there, his cloak folded and placed on the stone bench; he was strolling in the patio. When I came in, he walked up to me. I thought he was going to bawl me out for being late, but God helped me. My master asked me where I was coming from. I said:

"Sir, I remained here until two o'clock and when I saw that Your Honor wasn't coming, I walked through the city, throwing myself on the mercy of the kind people, and you see what they gave me."

I showed him the bread and the offal, which I was carrying wrapped in one end of my shirt. He looked happy to see it, and said:

47. Or: "left him to the proper sort of doctor." 48. "Offal Street," today the Calle Sixto Ramón Parro, a little east of the Cathedral.

"Well, I waited to eat until you were back, but once I saw you weren't coming, I had dinner. But in doing what you did, you've acted very respectably, because begging is better than stealing. May God help me, I think you've done the right thing. I only urge you not to let people know you're living with me, on account of my honor; though I'm sure it won't become common knowledge, because so few people here know me. I wish I never had come here!"

"Sir," I said, "put your mind to rest about that, because no one has any cause to question me about it, nor have I any to reply."

"Well, eat now, my poor boy, because, if God wills, we'll soon be out of hardship. Though I tell you that ever since I set foot in this house, things have never gone right for me; it must be built on evil soil, for there are unlucky and ill-omened houses that cause bad luck for whoever lives in them. This must surely be one. But I promise you that, when this month is up, I won't stay here even if they make me a gift of it."

I sat down on one end of the bench. So that he wouldn't consider me gluttonous, I said nothing about my midday meal, but started to have supper, biting into my offal and bread. I took sly looks at my unfortunate master, who couldn't tear his eyes away from the bottom of my shirt, which I was using as a plate at the moment. May God have as much pity on me as I had on him, because I felt what he was feeling, and had experienced it many a time, and experienced it daily. I wondered if it would be right to venture to invite him; but, since he had told me he had eaten, I was afraid he wouldn't accept the invitation. In short, I wished that that sinner would make use of my labors for his own necessities and would break his fast as he had done on the previous day, seeing that he had a better opportunity, the food being better and I less hungry.

God so willed it that my wish was granted, and I think his, too, because, when I started eating while he was walking up and down, he came up to me and said:

"I tell you, Lázaro, you eat as gracefully as I've ever seen anyone eat, and no one could watch you without getting an appetite even if he didn't have one."

"The fine one that you have," I said to myself, "makes you find mine attractive."

And so, I decided to help him since he was making an effort and showing me the way to do so, and I said: "Sir, a good opportunity makes a good craftsman; this bread is extremely tasty and this cow's foot is so well cooked and seasoned that no one could resist its flavor."

"It's a cow's foot?"

"Yes, sir."

"I tell you, that's the finest dish in the world, and I find it tastier than any pheasant."

"Then taste it, sir, and you'll see how good it is."

I placed the foot in his hands,[49] along with three or four portions of bread, from the whitest part; he sat down beside me and began eating like a man with a hearty appetite, gnawing each of the little bones more thoroughly than one of his hunting hounds would.

"This excellent dish," he said, "is made with a garlic and oil sauce."

"You're eating it with a better sauce,"[50] I replied quietly.

"By God, I found it as tasty as if I hadn't eaten a bite today."

"May I have no good years if that isn't the exact truth!" I said to myself.

He asked me for the water jug, which I handed him just as full as when I had brought it. Since he didn't lack water, that was a sign that my master hadn't had lots of food earlier on. We drank and went to bed very contentedly, as on the preceding night.

To make a long story short, we spent eight or ten days that way; every morning that poor sinner would go out, looking contented and walking at a measured pace, to spend his time on the streets doing nothing, since in poor Lázaro he had a goose that laid golden eggs.[51]

I frequently meditated on my unlucky stars: escaping from the terrible masters I had had and seeking a betterment of my lot, I had run into someone who not only didn't support me, but whom I had to support. All the same, I liked him, seeing that that was all he had or could do. I was more sorry for him than hostile to him. And many times, in order to bring home something for him to eat, I went hungry myself.

One morning, when the poor fellow got out of bed in his shirt and went upstairs to answer the call of nature,[52] I, eager to resolve my doubts, unfolded the doublet and breeches he had left at the head of the bed, and I found a small purse of smooth velvet, folded into a hundred folds and containing not a single *blanca* or any sign that it had contained any for a long time. "This man is poor," I said, "and no one can give something he doesn't own. Since the stingy blind man and that damned miserly priest both got sustenance from God, one when people kissed his hand and made an offering, and the other by means

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49. The Spanish has an untranslatable play on words: "I placed in his *uñas* (fingernails) that other *uña* (the cow's foot). 50. Referring to the proverb "Hunger is the best sauce." 51. Literally: "he had a wolf's head." The killer of a wolf was rewarded when he exhibited its head. 52. Chamberpots were kept in the attic.

of his ready tongue, and they still starved me to death, it's right for me to hate them, whereas I have pity for this man."

God is my witness that today, when I meet someone of his rank walking in the same pompous way, I pity him, wondering if he is suffering the pains that I saw *him* bear so patiently. Poor as he was, I'd rather work for him than for the others, for the reasons I've stated. I was just a little unhappy with him: I would have liked him to be a little less conceited, to lower his presumptuousness to suit the height of his indigence. But it seems to me to be a rule practiced and cherished among his sort: though they don't own the tiniest coin, their cap must remain in its place.[53] May God help them, because they're going to have that sickness till they die.

Well, while my condition was as described and I was leading my life this way, my evil fortune, which wasn't tired of pursuing me, brought it about that I couldn't remain in that difficult and shameful state. It was this way: Since there was a shortage of grain in the region that year, the city council decreed that all paupers from outside should leave town; they announced that any such encountered thenceforth would be flogged. The law went into effect, and, four days after the proclamation, I saw a procession of paupers being led through the Four Streets[54] and flogged. This frightened me so badly that I never again dared let myself go and beg.

Anyone observing us could clearly see at that point in time how bare my house was, and how sad and silent its occupants; so much so, that we had occasion to remain two or three days without eating a bite, and my master said not a word. As for me, I was kept alive by some low-class women who spun cotton and made caps; they lived alongside us, and I had become an acquaintance and good neighbor of theirs. From the pittance they themselves possessed, they gave me a few trifles, on which I just barely got along.[55]

I wasn't as sorry for myself as I was for my wretched master, who ate not a bite for a week. At least, we didn't eat at home for all that time. I don't know how or where he went, or what he ate. And to see him coming down the street at noon with his stiff beanpole of a body, longer than a pedigreed greyhound! And as for his damned honor, as they call it, he used to take a straw—and even those were none too plentiful in our house—and go outside the door, poking it around in

53. And not be readily doffed. 54. Between the Cathedral and the main square (Zocodover). 55. The Spanish has a pun on *me pasaba* and *pasado*, which may mean "like a dried fruit."

his teeth, which had nothing between them, constantly complaining about that unlucky building site, as follows:

"Things are bad, and this unfortunate house is to blame. As you see, it's gloomy, dismal, dark. As long as we remain here, we've got to suffer. I wish this month were already over so we could leave."

Well, while we were afflicted by this terrible hunger spell, one day, I don't know through what good luck or chance, a *real* fell into my master's poor hands; he came home with the coin as proud as if he owned the Venetian treasury, and gave it to me with a very happy, smiling face, saying:

"Here, Lázaro, God is now opening His hand for us. Go to the market and buy bread, wine, and meat: we'll put the Devil's eye out! And I have some other news to make you happy: I've rented another house, and we don't have to stay in this ill-starred one after the month is up. A curse on it, and on the man who laid the first tile on it, because it was an evil day when I set foot in it! By Our Lord, the whole time I've been living here, I haven't tasted a drop of wine or a bite of meat, or had any proper rest, it's so ugly, and so dark and dismal! Go and come back right away, and let's eat like counts today."

I took the *real* and the jug, and, as fast as I could go, I started to head up the street, in the direction of the market, very pleased and happy. But what's the good, if my bad luck is so constituted that I can't have any pleasure without its being upset? And so it was that time, because, as I went up the street, planning on how to spend the money best and most advantageously, and thanking God a thousand times for supplying my master with money, all at once I saw coming my way a dead man whom many priests and other people were carrying down the street on a bier.

I hugged the wall to give them room, and, after the body passed by, there came right after the bier a woman who must have been the dead man's wife, dressed in mourning and accompanied by many other women. She was weeping loudly as she went and saying:

"My husband and master, where are they taking you? To the dismal, unlucky house, to the gloomy, dark house, to the house where no one ever eats or drinks!"

Hearing those words, I became thoroughly alarmed[56] and said: "How unfortunate I am! They're taking this dead man to my house!"[57]

56. Literally: "the sky was joined to the earth for me." 57. According to at least one commentator, the inclusion here of this time-honored joke was the author's worst mistake. It doesn't fit the character of Lázaro, who isn't timid or superstitious, and who has seen many corpses at funerals.

I abandoned my line of march, cut through the crowd, and went back down the street toward home as fast as I could run. Once inside, I locked the door in great haste, calling on my master to save and help me; clasping him around, I begged him to come and help me keep them from coming in. He, a little upset because he thought it was something else, said: "What's this, boy? Why are you yelling? What's wrong with you? Why are you locking the door in such a frenzy?"

"Oh, master," I said, "come here and help, because they're bringing a dead man here!"

"How's that?" he replied.

"I ran across him up the street, and his wife was saying: 'My husband and master, where are they taking you? To the gloomy, dark house, to the sad, unlucky house, to the house where no one ever eats or drinks!' Sir, it must be here that they're bringing him!"

And, truly, when my master heard that, even though he didn't have much to laugh about, he laughed so hard that he couldn't talk for some time. Meanwhile I had fastened the door latch and set my shoulder against the door for greater protection. The people passed by with their corpse, but I was still afraid they would put it in our house. After my good master had had more of his fill of laughter than of food, he said:

"It's true, Lázaro; from what the widow said, you were right to think what you did; but, since God has saved us and they're passing by, open the door, open and go buy food."

"Sir, let them keep on; let them go all the way down the street," I said. At last my master came up to the street door and made me open it, which I really needed, I was so frightened and upset; and I went off on my way again. But, even though we dined well that day, I couldn't find any taste in the food, and I didn't get my color back for three days afterward. My master burst out laughing every time he remembered those reflections of mine.

I went on living that way with my poor third master, this nobleman, for several days, constantly eager to find out why he had come to this city and was dwelling here, since, from the first day I entered his service, I knew he was a stranger because he was so unfamiliar with things and mingled so little with the locals. Finally my wishes were granted and I learned what I wanted to know, because one day, after we had dined moderately well and he felt a bit contented, he told me about his affairs. He said he was from Old Castile, and that he had left his hometown solely to avoid doffing his hat to a knight who was his neighbor.

"Sir," I said, "if he was of the rank that you state, and if he was richer than you, weren't you wrong not to take off your hat first, since you say he also took off his hat to you?"

"He *is* of that rank, and he *is* richer, and he *did* also doff his hat to me; but, after all those times when I doffed mine first, he wouldn't have done wrong to venture just one time to anticipate me."

"It seems to me, sir," I said, "that I wouldn't have let that bother me, especially with people who outrank me and are wealthier."

"You're a boy," he replied, "and you can't have the proper feeling for affairs of honor, which nowadays represents all the riches of a gentleman. Let me tell you that I am a squire in rank, of the lower nobility, as you see; but, I swear to God, if I meet a count in the street and he doesn't raise his hat to me, high and all the way off his head, the next time I see him coming I'll walk into a house, pretending I have some business there, or cross over to another street, if there is one, before he comes up to me, to avoid doffing mine. For a nobleman owes nothing to anyone but God and the King, and it's wrong for a gentleman to derogate a jot from his self-respect. I remember that one day back home I insulted an artisan, and wanted to lay hands on him, because every time I met him, he'd say: 'May God sustain you, Your Honor.' 'You, you miserable peasant,' I replied that day, 'why aren't you polite? Must you say "May God sustain you" to me, as if I were just anybody?' From then on without fail, he doffed his hat to me and addressed me properly."

"And isn't it a proper way for one man to greet another," I asked, "when he wishes that God will sustain you?"

"I should say not!" he replied. "That's said to men of low rank, but to those of more elevated rank, like myself, the least that should be said is 'I kiss Your Honor's hands,' or, at the very least, 'Sir, I kiss your hands,' if the man addressing me is a knight. And so, I never again wanted to put up with that fellow back home who crammed me full of sustain-you's; nor would I put up with it; nor will I allow anyone in the world, from the King on down, to say 'May God sustain you' to me."

"Sinner that I am," I said to myself, "that's why He's so little concerned about sustaining you, because you won't allow anyone to pray to Him for that purpose."

"Especially," he continued, "because I'm not so poor that I don't possess a building site back home, which, if built upon with good, solid

houses and relocated on the Costanilla in Valladolid,[58] sixteen leagues from my birthplace, would be worth two hundred thousand *maravedís*, depending on how big and fine the houses were. I also possess a dovecote,[59] which, if it weren't a wreck as it now is, would produce over two hundred young pigeons yearly; and there are other things I won't mention, all of which I abandoned to protect my honor. And I came to this city thinking I'd find some suitable employment here,[60] but it hasn't turned out as I wished. I find plenty of cathedral canons and great churchmen, but they're such ungenerous people that no one can get them to change their ways. I've also had offers from knights of middling quality, but serving them is a great chore, because you have to change yourself from a man into a wild card,[61] or else they tell you good-bye. And very often your salary only falls due at long intervals, but most of the time you can rely on receiving only room and board. When they want to square their conscience and repay you for your labors, your account is settled in the wardrobe with a sweaty doublet or a threadbare cloak or tunic. Even when a man enters the service of a titled nobleman, he still has to put up with misery. Now, don't you think I'm clever enough to serve such people and give satisfaction? By God, if I came across one, I think I'd make a fine confidential servant and I'd perform a thousand services for him, because I'd know how to lie to him as well as anyone else could, and please him wonderfully well. I'd laugh heartily at his jokes and admire his habits, even if they weren't the best in the world. I'd never say anything that would annoy him, however much he might deserve it. In his presence I'd be extremely diligent in word and deed. I wouldn't knock myself out doing things properly if he wasn't liable to notice them. I'd start quarrels with his lower servants if he was around to hear, so that I'd seem to be greatly concerned for his affairs. If he quarreled with a servant, I'd get in some digs[62] to inflame his anger, making remarks that seemed to favor the guilty party. I'd say good things about what he considered good, and, on the other hand, I'd be malicious and scornful, and I'd inform on those inside the house and out. I'd investigate and try to learn about other people's doings so I could report them to him; and many other delightful actions of that sort

58. Valladolid harbored the royal court from 1543 to 1559, and enjoyed a real-estate boom around the time when the novel was published. The reference here is thus a strong point in favor of those who believe that the date of composition, and the time of the action, were not very long before the editions of 1554. The Costanilla was the most fashionable street in town. 59. This was a privilege of the clergy and nobility; pigeon raising could be profitable. 60. A nobleman could only work for someone of higher status, in some position of honor. 61. That is, adapt your own nature to anything they want you to do. 62. Or: "raise my voice."

which are customary in palaces nowadays and find favor with their owners. They don't want to see virtuous men in their homes; in fact, they loathe them, look down on them, and call them fools, people unfit to deal with, people the master can't feel safe with. And, as I've said, shrewd people nowadays handle such masters the way I would; but my bad luck won't allow me to find one."

In such manner my master, too, bewailed his adverse fortunes, giving me an account of his valiant character.

Well, while we were engaged in this conversation, a man and an old woman came in at the door. The man asked him for the house rent, and the woman for the rent on the bed. They toted up their accounts, and for a two-month period they arrived at a sum that my master wouldn't have managed to accumulate in a year. I think it was twelve or thirteen *reales*. He answered them very cordially: he would go to the market and break a two-*castellano* coin,[63] and they should come back in the afternoon. But when he left, it was never to return.

And so, they came back later, in the afternoon, but later was too late. I told them he wasn't back yet. When night came and he didn't, I was afraid of staying in the house alone. I went to the women next door, told them what had happened, and slept there.

The next morning, the creditors came and asked the women about their neighbor, but got little satisfaction.[64] The women told them: "This is his servant boy, and here is the key to the door."

The creditors asked me about him, and I told them I didn't know where he was, that he hadn't come home since he had gone out to break the coin, and that I thought he had abandoned both me and them with that money-changing.

When they heard me say that, they went to fetch a constable and a clerk. They came back with them at once, took the key, called me, called witnesses, opened the door, and went in to seize my master's belongings until their debt was paid. They went all through the house. Finding it as bare as I've described, they said to me: "What about your master's belongings: his chests, wall hangings, and furniture?"

"I have no idea," I replied.

"No doubt," they said, "they must have removed them last night and taken them somewhere else. Constable, arrest this boy, because he knows where his master is."

Thereupon the constable came and seized the collar of my doublet,

63. A gold coin worth about 30 *reales*. 64. Literally: "[go] to the other door [because this one doesn't open]."

saying: "Boy, you're under arrest if you don't tell us where your master's property is."

Since I had never found myself in a similar situation (I had been grabbed by the collar time and time again, but gently, so that I might show the way to the blind man), I was severely frightened. I started to cry and promised to tell them what they wanted to know.

"Good!" they said. "Then, tell all you know and don't be afraid." The clerk sat down on a stone bench to make out the inventory; he asked me what my master owned.

"Gentlemen," I said, "according to what he told me, what my master owns is a very good building site and a wrecked dovecote."

"Good!" they said. "No matter how little that's worth, it will help compensate us for the debt. And what part of town is that in?" they asked.

"In his hometown," I replied.

"By God, what a good deal this is!" they said. "And where is his hometown?"

"He said it was in Old Castile," I replied.

The constable and clerk laughed heartily, saying: "This report makes it certain that you'll recover your debt, even if it were bigger."

The women from next door, who were present, said: "Gentlemen, he's an innocent child and has been with this nobleman only a few days. He knows no more about him than Your Honors do. In fact, the poor little beggar has been coming over to our house, and we've been feeding him whatever we can out of charity. At night he went back to sleep in his master's house."

In view of my innocence, they released me, declaring I was free. Then the constable and clerk asked the man and woman for their fee. Over this there was a great wrangle and racket. The debtors affirmed that they had no obligation to pay because nothing had been accomplished and no property had been seized. The others said that they had neglected answering another call that would have been more profitable, when they answered this one.

In short, after a lot of shouting, an assistant constable finally carried away the old lady's old blanket, though it was no strain on him. All five of them departed, shouting. I don't know how it ended up, but I think that that sinful blanket bore everybody's costs. And it deserved to do so, because at its age, when it should have retired and rested from its past labors, it was still hiring itself out.

In the manner I have related, my poor third master abandoned me. In this I became fully aware of my terrible luck, which, making its

hostility to me crystal clear, turned all my doings so upside-down that, whereas masters generally are left by their servants, for me it wasn't so, but my master abandoned and ran away from me.

CHAPTER FOUR

How Lázaro Was Employed by a Mercedarian Friar, and What Happened to Him in His Company

I had to look for a fourth master, and this proved to be a Mercedarian friar,[65] to whom the low-class women I have mentioned directed me. They said he was a relative.[66] He was a great enemy of prayers in the choir and meals in the refectory, but was hell-bent on wandering abroad, being extremely fond of secular matters and paying visits. So much so, that I think he wore out more shoes than anyone else in the monastery. He gave me the first shoes I ever wore out in my life; but they didn't last me a week, and I couldn't keep up with his gadding about. For that reason, and for a few other trifling matters that I won't mention,[67] I left him.

CHAPTER FIVE

How Lázaro Was Employed by an Indulgence Seller, and of the Things That Befell Him in His Company

The fifth master I chanced to fall in with was a seller of indulgences,[68] the most brazen and shameless, and the most skillful dispatcher of them, that I've ever seen or hope to see: that anyone has ever seen, I think. Because he knew and sought out special ways and means to unload them, including some very subtle contrivances.

On arriving in places where they were going to promote the indulgence, first he presented to the priests or curates some little things, not of much value or substance, either: a lettuce from Murcia, if the season was right; a pair of limes or oranges; a large peach or a couple

65. See the section "The Characters" in the Introduction. 66. An indication of illicit relations. 67. Many commentators are convinced that this means the friar abused Lázaro sexually. 68. See "The Characters" in the Introduction.

of smaller peaches; a green pear[69] apiece. Thus he tried to win their favor for his business and get them to urge the faithful to buy an indulgence.

When they came to thank him, he would find out how qualified they were. If they said they understood Latin, he didn't speak it, to avoid making a blunder; instead, he used a smooth, elegant Spanish, which flowed from his tongue. If he saw that these priests were "reverend" (that is, money rather than learning had gained them their position, with letters beginning "Reverend sir"),[70] then among them he turned into a Saint Thomas and spoke in Latin for two hours—at least, what seemed to be Latin, though it wasn't.

When people didn't buy his indulgences readily, he sought ways to get them to do it. To that end, he made trouble for the people, and other times he used crafty tricks. And, since it would take me too long to narrate all the tricks I saw him play, I'll tell you one very sly and funny one, with which I'll fully prove his skill.

In a village in the Sagra de Toledo[71] he had been preaching for two or three days, taking his usual preliminary measures, but the people hadn't bought one indulgence, nor did they intend to, as far as I could see. He was furious over this; planning his course of action, he decided to summon the villagers to appear at the closing ceremony the next morning.

That night after supper, he and his constable gambled to see who would pay for the snack they would have with their wine. They started to quarrel over the game and to insult each other. He called the constable a thief, and the other man called him a counterfeiter. Thereupon the indulgence commissioner, my master, picked up a large lance that was in the hallway where they were gambling. The constable laid hand on his sword, which hung from his belt.

At the noise and shouts we all uttered, our hosts and neighbors came running and intervened. The two combatants, very irritated, tried to shake off those who stood in the way of their killing each other. But since the people crowded around at that great racket, and the inn was full of them, they saw that they couldn't settle accounts with weapons and started insulting each other; among other insults, the constable called my master a counterfeiter and said that the indulgences he preached were fakes.

69. Green-colored even when ripe. 70. Letters from a bishop giving another prelate permission to ordain a man who fell under the letter-writer's jurisdiction. 71. A region northeast of Toledo, on the way to Madrid.

Finally the villagers, finding themselves insufficient to reconcile them, decided to remove the constable from the inn and take him elsewhere. And thus my master remained there, quite vexed. After our hosts and neighbors begged him to relinquish his anger and go to bed, he did so, and so we all did.

When morning came, my master went to the church and ordered them to ring for Mass and for the concluding indulgence sermon. The villagers gathered, grumbling about the indulgences and saying they were fakes, as the constable himself had revealed during the quarrel. And so, having shown little inclination to buy them previously, now they despised them altogether.

The commissioner ascended the pulpit and began his sermon, urging the people not to neglect all the benefits and pardons that the holy indulgence afforded. When he was at the height of his sermon, the constable came in through the church door; after reciting a prayer, he stood up and, in a loud, calm voice, started to speak quite rationally:

"Good people, allow me to say a word, and then you can listen to whom you choose. I came here in the company of this charlatan who is preaching to you, and who deceived me, asking me to help him out in this deal, and saying we would share the profits. Now, seeing the harm I would do to my conscience and to your pocketbooks, I repent what I have done, and I declare straight out that the indulgences he is preaching are fakes. Don't believe him and don't buy any. I have no part in them, either directly or indirectly, and from here on I put aside my staff of office and throw it to the ground. If at some future time he is punished for his counterfeiting, I want you to be witnesses that I am not part of his entourage and am not aiding him in any way; on the contrary, I'm opening your eyes to his wickedness." And he ended his speech.

A few honorable men among those present wanted to get up and throw the constable out of the church, to avoid a scandal. But my master prevented them; he ordered everyone, under pain of excommunication, not to disturb him, but to let him say all that he wanted. And so, he, too, kept silence while the constable said all that I have reported. When he fell silent, my master asked him to go on with anything more he might have to say.

The constable said: "I have plenty more to say about you and your deceptions, but that's enough for now."

The commissioner fell to his knees in the pulpit; clasping his hands together and looking up to heaven, he said: "My Lord God, to whom nothing is hidden, but all things are revealed, and to whom nothing is

impossible, but everything is possible, You know the truth and how unjustly I have been insulted. As far as I am concerned, I forgive him, so that You, Lord, may forgive me. Pay no mind to the man who knows not what he does or says. But, as for the insult given to You, I beseech You, and ask You out of justice, don't overlook it; because some of those present, who might have planned to buy this holy indulgence, may lend credence to that man's false words, and might decide not to do so. Since it is such a detriment to my fellow man, I beseech You, Lord, don't overlook it, but perform some miracle here at once, and of this nature: If what he says is true, and I am false and evil, let this pulpit sink with me fifty feet into the earth, and let it and me never be seen again. But if what I say is true, and that man, won over by the Devil (in order to rob and deprive those present of such a great benefit), speaks wickedness, let *him* be punished so that all men know his evil ways."

My pious master had scarcely ended his prayer, when that damned constable fainted away, hitting the floor with such a loud thud that the whole church re-echoed. Then he started to bellow, foam at the mouth, twist his mouth, make terrible faces, strike out with his hands and feet, and roll around the floor from side to side.

The racket and the people's shouting were so loud that they couldn't hear one another. A few were alarmed and afraid. Some said: "May the Lord aid and assist him!" Others: "He deserves it, because he was bearing such false witness."

Finally a few of those present, not without great fear, it seemed to me, went up to him and seized his arms, with which he was delivering hard punches to those within reach. Others pulled him by the legs and held him fast, because there wasn't a vicious mule in the world that gave such hard kicks. And they held him that way for some time; more than fifteen men were all over him, and he gave them all a hard time, and, if they were careless, a punch in the nose.

While all this was happening, my lord and master was kneeling in the pulpit, his hands clasped and his eyes fixed on heaven, transported into the divine essence; the weeping, noise, and shouts in the church had no power to pry him out of his holy meditation.

Those good men went up to him, and woke him up with their shouts; they begged him to be good enough to aid that poor man who was dying. Let him pay no mind to what had occurred or to his opponent's spiteful words, since he was already paying for them; if he could do anything to free him from the dangerous state he was in, let him do so for the love of God, because they clearly saw the guilty man's guilt, and

the preacher's truthfulness and goodness, since when he called for retribution, the Lord didn't defer the punishment for one minute.

The commissioner, like a man awakening from a gentle slumber, looked at them, looked at the offender and at all those standing around, and said very calmly: "Good people, there was no cause for you to pray for a man in whom God has so manifestly shown His anger; but, since He commands us not to return evil for evil, but to forgive insults to us, we can confidently beseech Him to observe His own commandment to us; may His Majesty forgive this man, who offended Him by setting impediments to His holy religion. Let us all beseech Him."

And so, he descended from the pulpit and urged everyone to pray very devoutly to Our Lord to deign to pardon that sinner and restore his health and reason, casting the Devil out of him, if His Majesty had allowed him to enter his body on account of his great sin.

All present fell to their knees, and, in front of the altar, along with the priests, they started to chant a quiet litany. My lord and master, coming with a cross and holy water, chanted over the victim, clasped his hands together, and raised his eyes to heaven, so that almost nothing could be seen of them except a little of their white; then he began a prayer as lengthy as it was pious, which made everyone weep (as generally occurs at Good Friday sermons, when the preacher and the listeners are devout); in it he begged Our Lord, who does not desire the death of a sinner, but his life in a state of repentance, to deign to pardon and give life and health to that man who had been directed by the Devil and led astray on the path of death and sin; thus, he would repent and confess his sins.

After that, he asked for a copy of the indulgence and placed it on the victim's head. Immediately that sinful constable began to get better gradually and come to his senses. After his reason was fully restored, he threw himself at the commissioner's feet and asked for his forgiveness. He confessed that he had said what he did at the Devil's dictation and command, for two reasons: first, to do the commissioner harm and avenge himself for his vexation; second (the chief reason), because the Devil derives great pain from the benefit the people there would gain by buying the indulgence.

My master forgave him, and they renewed their friendship. Then there was such eagerness to buy the indulgence that there was hardly a living soul in the village who didn't acquire one, husbands and wives, sons and daughters, man- and maidservants.

The news of the event spread through the nearby villages, and

when we got to them, there was no need of a sermon or a church service, because people came to our inn to buy, as if the indulgences were pears given away free. So that, in ten or twelve villages we visited in that vicinity, my master unloaded ten or twelve thousand indulgences without preaching a sermon.

When he played that trick, I confess, to my discredit, that I was frightened by it, too, thinking, like many other people, that it really happened that way. But later, when I observed the way my master and the constable were laughing and showing their contempt over that deal, I realized that it had been a scheme of my scheming, inventive master.[72]

[We had the following experience in another village, whose name I won't mention to safeguard its honor. My master preached two or three sermons, but not a solitary indulgence was bought. When my clever master saw the way things were going, and that he was getting nowhere even when he offered the indulgences on credit for a year, but the people were so set against buying them, and his labors were in vain, he ordered the church bells rung for a concluding sermon. After giving it and closing the ceremony from the pulpit, when he was about to descend, he called the clerk and me (I was loaded down with several saddlebags) and summoned us over to the first step. He took from the constable the copies of the indulgence that he had in his hands, and he placed those I had in the saddlebags next to his feet. He returned to the pulpit with a cheerful face, and from there he flung his indulgences by tens and twenties in every direction, saying:

"Brothers, take them, receive of the grace that God is sending to your homes, and have no regrets, because it is such a pious work to ransom Christian captives in Moorish lands, so that they do not renounce our holy religion and thus suffer in Hell. Just aid them with your alms, and with five Our Fathers and five Hail Marys, so that they are released from captivity. And these indulgences are also good for your parents, brothers and sisters, and other relatives in Purgatory, as you will see when you read this holy certificate."

When the people saw him flinging them out that way, like a thing given away free and handed out without working for it, they took all they could, even for the babies in the cradle, and for all their deceased family members, from their children down to their humblest servant, counting them on their fingers. We found ourselves in such a crush that they nearly managed to rip a wretched old shirt I was wearing. So

72. The following long passage enclosed in square brackets is an interpolation found in the Alcalá edition of 1554.

that I guarantee Your Honor that, in a little over an hour, there wasn't an indulgence left in the saddlebags, and we had to go back to the inn for more.

When everyone had taken some, my master, still in the pulpit, asked his clerk and the clerk of the town council to get up and take down the names of the recipients, so that it might be known who was to enjoy the benefits of the holy indulgence and the pardons granted by the papal bull, and so that he could make a strict accounting to those who had sent him.

And so, everyone immediately reported very gladly how many they had taken, counting up their children, servants, and departed kin in orderly fashion.

When his roster was completed, he asked the village magistrates—he himself, he said, had urgent business elsewhere—to be kind enough to order the clerk to send him a notarized copy of the roster and a record of the indulgences left there, which, according to the clerk, came to over two thousand.[73]

Thereupon he took his leave in an atmosphere of peace and love, and so we departed from that village. But even before we left, he was asked by the assistant to the parish priest of the village and by the magistrates whether the indulgence covered infants still in their mother's womb. He said that, in the light of the books he had studied, he didn't think so; they should go ask theologians who were older than himself; that was his only regret in these dealings.

And so we left, all happy over the good business deal. My master said to his constable and clerk: "What do you think about these rustics, who think they can be saved merely by saying 'we're Old Christians,'[74] and without doing works of charity or spending any of their money? Well, by the life of the graduate Pascasio Gómez, let more than ten captives be ransomed at their expense!"

And so we headed for another village on the outskirts of Toledo, on the way to La Mancha, as it's called, where we ran across others even more dead set against buying indulgences. After my master and we others with him had taken our preliminary measures, on the two feast days during our stay there we hadn't unloaded thirty indulgences.

When my master saw how much he was losing and how much he was spending, he cleverly conceived the following ploy for getting rid of his indulgences. That day, he said High Mass. When he had finished

73. Apparently, with these documents in hand, the money could be collected later on, though the villagers seem unaware of this, despite the offer of credit. 74. That is, not converts from Islam or Judaism.

his sermon and returned to the altar, he took a cross he had, not much bigger than a span, and, without anyone noticing it, placed it behind the missal in a brazier that stood on top of the altar (they had brought it for him to warm his hands, because it was a very cold day). There, without saying a word, he put the cross on the fire and, when he had finished the Mass and pronounced the benediction, he picked up the cross, thickly wrapped in a piece of cloth, with his right hand and a copy of the indulgence with his left, and walked down to the lowest step of the altar, where he pretended to kiss the cross. He made a sign for people to come and worship the cross. And so the magistrates and the village elders came first, going up one at a time as customary.

The first man who came, an aged magistrate, burned his mouth, even though my master gave him the cross to kiss very gently, and he left the spot quickly. When my master saw this, he said to him: "Take careful note, magistrate! A miracle!"

The same thing occurred with seven or eight others. To each one he said: "Take note, gentlemen! A miracle!"

When he saw that those with burnt faces were sufficient as witnesses to the miracle, he didn't give the cross to anyone else to kiss. He ascended to the foot of the altar and from there he said wonderful things, declaring that God had permitted that miracle because of the lack of charity they displayed; that cross would have to be brought to the holy cathedral in his bishopric, because, to show that village's lack of charity, it had started to burn.

There was such a crush of people to buy indulgences that the two clerks, the priests, and the sacristans couldn't record all their names. I firmly believe that over three thousand were bought, as I've told Your Honor.

Later, when we were leaving, he went, with all the great reverence due, to take that holy cross, saying that he must have it mounted in gold, which was only right. He was ardently begged by the village council and the local priests to leave them that holy cross in memory of the miracle that had occurred there. He refused absolutely, but finally, when so many people were pleading for it, he left it there. In exchange they gave him another old cross they owned, an antique made of silver and probably weighing two or three pounds, according to their statement.

And so we departed merrily because of that profitable exchange and the good business we had done. No one but myself saw the actions I have described. Because I had gone up close to the altar to see if any Communion wine was left in the flasks, so I could store it away as I usually did; and when he saw me there, he put his finger to his

lips as a sign that I should keep quiet. And so I did, because it was my duty; though, after seeing the miracle, I was unable to reveal the truth—fear of my sly master kept me from telling anyone about it, and I never did. Because he made me swear never to explain the miracle, and I've kept quiet to this very day.]

Though I was just a boy, I found this very funny, and I said to myself: "How many such tricks these sharpsters must play on innocent people!"

The long and the short of it was that I remained with this fifth master of mine for about four months, in the course of which I also underwent plenty of labors,[75] [although he gave me enough to eat, at the expense of the curates and other priests in the places where he went to preach].

CHAPTER SIX

How Lázaro Was Employed by a Chaplain, and What Befell Him in His Company

After that I took a job with a painter of tambourines,[76] to grind his colors. There, too, I suffered a thousand griefs.

Being a sturdy, older boy by this time, one day when I went into the cathedral, I was hired by one of the chaplains.[77] He placed in my keeping a donkey, four large pitchers, and a whip, and I started to sell water on the streets of the city. This was the first rung on the ladder I have climbed to reach a good life, because my voice was suited to the calling. Every weekday I handed over to my master thirty *maravedís* that I had taken in; on Saturdays all the income was for me, as was anything over the daily thirty *maravedís* during the week.

I did so well at that job that, after working at it for four years and taking good care of my earnings, I had saved up enough to outfit myself quite respectably at an old-clothes dealer's. I bought an old fustian doublet and a worn-out tunic with braided sleeves and trimming in front, a cloak that had once had a curled nap, and a sword that was one of the first made in Cuéllar[78] way back when. Once I saw myself dressed like a worthy citizen, I told my master to take back his donkey, because I didn't want to do that kind of work anymore.

75. The following bracketed words are an interpolation in the Alcalá edition. 76. These painters generally peddled their tambourines. 77. Priests in charge of the individual chapels in the cathedral. 78. A town near Segovia famous for its swords many decades before the time of the story.

CHAPTER SEVEN

How Lázaro Was Employed by a Constable, and What Happened to Him in His Company

After taking leave of the chaplain, I hired myself out to a constable as an assistant lawman. But I remained with him only briefly, because I found it a dangerous job. One night, especially, some criminals[79] chased my master and me, brandishing clubs and throwing stones. My master stood his ground and was badly hurt, but they didn't catch me. After that, I reneged on the deal.

While I was pondering over what kind of work to take up permanently, so I could enjoy some peace and save up something for my old age, God was pleased to enlighten me and guide my steps in a profitable direction. With the aid of friends and influential people, all the labors and griefs I had undergone up till then were compensated when I obtained the position I sought—a government employment—because no one prospers who doesn't have one of those.

And I still have it today, residing here at the service of God and Your Honor's. My job is to cry the wines that are sold in this city,[80] to act as auctioneer, and to announce that items have been lost; and also to accompany those who are judicially punished, calling out their crimes—to put it in plain language, I'm a town crier.[81]

[On this job, one day when we were hanging a thief in Toledo, and I was carrying a strong rope of esparto grass, I remembered the prophecy that my blind master had uttered in Escalona, and I felt sorry for the bad return I had made him for all that he taught me. Because, after God, it was he who gave me the know-how to get to the position I now occupy.]

I've done so well at this job, which has come to me so naturally, that almost all matters pertaining to the position pass through my hands. So much so, that throughout the city anyone with wine to sell, or other things, imagines he isn't getting his money's worth unless Lázaro de Tormes has a hand in it.

Around this time, seeing my skill and respectable habits, and inquiring more closely about me, the archpriest[82] of San Salvador,[83] my

79. Specifically, those who took refuge in churches but sallied out at night to commit crimes. 80. The owners of the wine paid the crier to make a public proclamation that wine was for sale. 81. The following bracketed paragraph is an interpolation in the Alcalá edition. 82. Usually, vicar to a bishop, dean of the cathedral. 83. A parish in Toledo.

master and Your Honor's humble servant and friend, whose wines I was crying, offered to arrange a marriage for me with one of his servant women. Realizing that such a match could only lead to prosperity and favor, I agreed to enter it. And so, I married her, and I've never been sorry I did.

Because, besides the fact that she's a good girl and a diligent servant, I enjoy a great deal of favor and assistance from my patron, the archpriest: at different times in the course of the year he always gives us something like two hundred liters of wheat; meat at Eastertime; and, when he gives us a couple of loaves from the offering, I get a pair of his old breeches as well. He also had us rent a little house near his own. Almost every Sunday and holiday, we eat in his house.

But slandermongers, of whom there are plenty and always will be, don't let us live; they say I-don't-know-what and I-do-know-what when they see my wife go to make his bed and cook his meals. May God help them if they're telling the truth![84]

[And yet, around that time, I always had some minor doubts; at times I had miserable suppertimes, waiting as long as Lauds,[85] and even later, for her to get home, some nights. Then I would remember what my master, the blind man, told me in Escalona when he was holding onto the horn. But, to tell the truth, I always believe that the Devil is making me remember it in order to make me unhappy in my marriage—though it does him no good.]

Because, besides the fact that she's not the sort of woman to indulge in such deceptions, my patron has made me a promise that I think he'll keep. Because one day he made me a long speech in her presence and told me:

"Lázaro de Tormes, no one who pays attention to the sayings of slandermongers will ever prosper. I say this because no such saying would surprise me, since people see your wife entering and leaving my house. It is to your complete honor and hers that she does so, I promise you that. Therefore pay no attention to anything they may say, but give heed to things that concern you—I mean, that turn to your advantage."

"Sir," I said, "I'm determined to throw in my lot with good people. It's true that some of my friends have mentioned these rumors to me, and more than three times they've declared that she gave birth to three children before marrying me; I apologize to Your Honor for my crude language, because she's present."[86]

84. The implication is that they aren't. The following bracketed paragraph is an interpolation in the Alcalá edition. 85. Ecclesiastical hours usually read right after Matins, at daybreak. 86. This cumbersome sentence has been interpreted in various other ways.

Then my wife swore so many oaths protesting her innocence that I thought the house would sink into the earth along with us. Then she began to cry and to curse the people who had married her to me. She went on so, that I wished I had died before uttering those words. But we told her and promised her so much, I on one side and my patron on the other, that she stopped crying, after I swore never to mention anything of the sort to her as long as I lived, and assured her that I was pleased, and found it right, that she should go in and out, day or night, because I trusted completely in her chastity. And so all three of us were in agreement.

Up till this day, no one has heard us discuss the matter; in fact, whenever I think that someone is about to mention it, I cut him short with these words:

"See here, if you're my friend, don't tell me anything that will give me pain, because I don't consider anyone who grieves me to be a friend; especially if he wants to put me on bad terms with my wife, because she's the thing I love best in the world—I love her better than I do myself. In her, God shows me a thousand favors, much more than I deserve; for I'll swear on the consecrated Host that she's as good a woman as any dwelling within the gates of Toledo. I'll fight anyone who tells me something different." That way, they tell me nothing, and I enjoy domestic peace.

That was the same year[87] in which our victorious emperor[88] celebrated a formal entrée in this famous city of Toledo, and held a parliament in it; there were great festivities, as Your Honor must have heard. Well, at that time I was prospering and at the pinnacle of my good fortune.

[I'll let Your Honor know about whatever happens to me from now on.][89]

87. The dating of the story depends partially on the identification of this date; see the Introduction. 88. Holy Roman Emperor Charles V (King Charles I of Spain). 89. This final interpolation in the Alcalá edition leaves the door wide open to sequels and continuations (which was probably not the original author's intention; see the section "The Continuations" in the Introduction).